

THE SAINTS OF ZION: AN ESCHATOLOGICAL IDENTITY
FOR THE SAINTS CHURCH (R.L.D.S.)

by
Michael Glenn Davis

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This professional project, completed by

MICHAEL G. DAVIS

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee

all of more
Frank Perkins

April 17, 1983
Date

Joseph C. Hays
Dean

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ABSTRACT

The Saints Church (The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) is in the midst of an identity crisis which is caused by discordant theological views and divergent definitions of church identity. The purpose of this project is to define a theological basis for a unique identity within the Saints Church, which will accommodate diverse theological viewpoints.

The project thesis proposes that the Restoration (Mormon) concept of Zion can provide an inclusive theological basis for unique common identity, purpose and motivation within the Saints Church. Zion is a name used by the Restoration (Mormon) churches to refer to their idea of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Traditionally Zion has been a major point of unique identity within the Saints Church, and theologically it falls into the category of Eschatology.

A secondary project thesis maintains that it is important for the members of a church to have a clear sense of identity and purpose in order to sustain positive membership motivation and organizational strength. This thesis was supported by the research evidence and the organizational theory of Philip Selznick. Selznick associates homogeneous identity with organizational stability, strength, and membership motivation.

The Theology of Zion defined in this project is called Zionology. It attempts to provide a context which allows for the embracing and the unification of diverse and sometimes conflicting images, definitions, and approaches to Zion. The exegetical method of James A. Sanders and the German concept of 'Zeitgeist' provided the theoretical framework for the 'Contextual Time Factor Approach' of this project, which proposes to resolve conflicting Zionitic images through contextual and exegetical analysis.

Zionology provides the Saints with a unique corporate identity--'The Saints of Zion'. This identity unifies and unites the Saints with their major mission and purpose--Zion. Because Zionology defines a clear sense of identity and purpose for the Saints; it could also provide a basis for positive membership motivation within the Saints Church, if properly implemented. The results could be--a stronger church.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This project deals with the problem of defining a theological basis for a unique identity within the Saints Church (Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints).

The Saints Church is in the midst of an identity crisis. Since the World Conference of 1966, the church has officially been involved in a process of trying to clarify and redefine its theology, purpose, and mission in the light of contemporary problems and issues. During this time there has been an on-going struggle within the church which has resulted in some disunity and minor schism.

In the 1980's the leaders of the Saints Church are still trying to direct the church away from the historical and theological bonds of its 19th century origins. The delegates to the 1980 and 1982 World Conferences seemingly supported the new direction of the church. Harmony prevailed in the business meetings and the contention which has marked former conferences was absent. Yet there remains significant feelings of dissatisfaction and disagreement among church members and leaders which is caused by discordant theological views and divergent definitions of church identity.

In 1983 the Saints Church continues to be a denomination in search of an identity. Externally the Saints can be compared with the public image problem of Goodrich Tire Co.: "We're the ones without the blimp,".¹ Internally there is no unifying identity. For many of the members, the old images remain valuable, for others the old forms of identity must be overcome and replaced with a more inclusive and ecumenical understanding.

The purpose of this project is to define a theological basis for a unique identity within the Saints Church; which utilizes the historical, scriptural, and theological context of the Restoration (Mormon) Movement; and accommodates the diverse theological viewpoints of the members.

PROBLEM EXPOSITION AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

During the beginning years of the Restoration (Mormon) Movement, church identity was well defined under the leadership of Joseph Smith, Jr. (1830-44). The church called themselves the 'Saints' or 'Latter Day Saints'; while those outside the church referred to them as 'Mormonites' or 'Mormons'. For those early members, the Church of Latter-day Saints was the only 'true church' and all other denominations were false. Clifford A. Cole, former President of the Quorum of Twelve, points out two major themes which helped in the formation of identity in the early Restoration (Mormon)

¹Wallace B. Smith, Los Angeles Times (April 5, 1980) Par 1-a, p. 1, col. 4.

Movement:²

1. The claim to divine authority and salvation; and
2. The claim to divine plans in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The early Mormon founders claimed to have certain spiritual experiences and manifestations (theophanies, angelic visions, prophecies, etc.) by which they were given authority by God to restore the Church of Jesus Christ as it was originally in the time of the Apostles. Thus they proclaimed that their Church of Christ was. . . "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth,. . .".³

The major mission of the church was a commission to build the City of Zion, which was to be a tangible example of the Kingdom of God on earth. This idea resulted in various community experiments at Kirtland, Ohio; Independence, Missouri; Farwest, Missouri; and Nauvoo, Illinois.

In June 1844, the Mormon prophet and leader, Joseph Smith, was killed by an anti-mormon mob, along with his brother Hyrum Smith. Joseph Smith had kept the divergent church together by his personal charisma. Now that he was gone, the church began to fracture and split. There were major doctrinal controversies and organizational problems which broke to the surface as the Saints struggled with the problem of leadership succession.

²Clifford A. Cole, "The World Church Our Mission in the 1980s," Commission (September 1979) 46.

³Doctrine and Covenants (Independence, MO: Herald, 1970) 1:5e.

Many of the Saints were under the impression that Joseph Smith's son, Joseph III, would be the next church President. Joseph had named his son, as his successor, several times before public and private gatherings; but he was only eleven years old at the time. Joseph's brother, William Smith, who was one of the Council of Twelve, supported this view, and proposed himself to be a 'guardian' over the church until 'Young Joseph' could assume the leadership role. President Sydney Rigdon also supported this view, but claimed for himself the role of 'guardian'.

In August 1844, a conference was quickly called in Nauvoo to consider the leadership question. There were several thousand members present at the gathering, mostly residents of Nauvoo. The claim of Rigdon was denied while the Council of Twelve were officially sustained as leaders of the church. The claim of William Smith was not considered. Brigham Young was the spokesman and the President of the Council of Twelve. He increasingly became the dominant figure during the remainder of the Nauvoo period.

As President of the Council of Twelve, Brigham Young had gained a prominent position in civic and church affairs, and his practical and able leadership was well known in Nauvoo. Although President Sydney Rigdon was officially equal with Joseph Smith as leader over the entire church, and a logical successor to Smith, he had moved to Pennsylvania in 1843, and was supervising the eastern branches and colonies of the church. Rigdon was known to be in disagreement with

Smith over organizational procedures, and with the Nauvoo church leaders over certain new doctrines and practices which were recently introduced. This tended to discredit him in the eyes of the Nauvoo Saints.

When the Saints were forced by anti-mormon mobs and unofficial militia to leave their homes in Nauvoo in 1846, a majority of the Nauvoo Saints followed Brigham Young on the western trek to the Great Salt Lake Valley. However, this group was only a minority of the estimated total church membership at the time. Many of the Saints who lived in other regions rejected his leadership and either chose to follow different leaders or disassociated themselves altogether from the movement.

Basically the fractures in the church took place along geographical lines. However, doctrinal issues and practices were the root and the cause of the division. The early 'Mormon' religion was not a static religious organization. Many new theological positions were introduced and numerous organization changes were made during the early period of 1829-1844. Quite a few doctrines and practices were introduced in Nauvoo, some of these circulated secretly among only a few select leaders. Controversial rites including; Polygamy, Celestial Marriage, Baptism of the Dead, etc., entered into Mormonism during this time. The origins of such Mormon doctrines, as the Adam-God theology and exclusion of the black race from the priesthood, can also be traced to the final years at Nauvoo.

In the case of polygamy, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum publicly condemned the practice as recent as three months prior to their death, and excommunicated several ministers for teaching or practicing it.⁴

Following the murder of Joseph and Hyrum, Brigham Young and several other church leaders began to openly practice polygamy claiming that the Smith brothers had introduced it secretly. The doctrine of Celestial Marriage, which included provisions for the practice of polygamy, never became an official rite of the church in Nauvoo. The doctrine was later presented by Brigham Young to the church at a conference, in August 1852, at Salt Lake City. It was presented in the form of a 'revelation' purported to have been written by Joseph Smith on July 12, 1843.⁵

There was a division between the church leaders in Nauvoo and the leaders in other locations over the acceptance of some of these new practices. Only approximately 20,000 of the estimated 100,000 members of the church were living in the Nauvoo locale and were exposed to the new secret doctrines and temple rites.⁶ As the leadership began to teach and practice these new ideas out in the open; the church began to divide. The Saints in other regions and

⁴Joseph Smith, Jr. and Hyrum Smith, Times and Seasons, v: (February 1, 1844), 423; Times and Seasons, V: (March 15, 1844), 474.

⁵Doctrine and Covenants, Utah Edition, Section 132.

⁶The membership is uncertain for this period. Church publications claim over 150,000 members but this is highly unlikely. The lowest estimate is 27,000. 100,000 seems to be the figure most quoted.

locales were unfamiliar with the latest doctrinal developments and tended to associate them with and attribute them to the new administration. The practice of polygamy was particularly offensive to many. As different leaders voiced their opinions in opposition to the leadership, and the new practices, they were excommunicated by the Council of Twelve along with their following:

By 1848, the fracture of the church was complete. Approximately 15,000 Saints were led by Brigham Young and a majority of the Council of Twelve, to the Great Salt Lake Valley. On the way, the Saints spent the winter near what is now Council Bluffs, Iowa. There they held a conference, on December 27, 1847, which officially installed Brigham Young as the new President of the church.

There were many independent colonies of Saints scattered throughout the country who refused to follow Brigham Young to Salt Lake. Several hundred Saints were led by Sidney Rigdon in Pennsylvania. Three hundred plus followed Lyman Wight, a member of the Council of Twelve, and founded a colony in Texas. James J. Strang led several colonies of Saints in Wisconsin and Michigan. Nearly 10,000 members were purported to be connected to his organization at its peak. Alpheus Cutler led several groups in Iowa and Minnesota. David Whitmer, an early church President, founded several small groups in Missouri.

Even the Smith family was divided. Hyrum Smith's family went west with Brigham Young. Joseph's older brother,

William Smith, eventually led a large group of Saints with colonies in the midwest and a few congregations in the east. The rest of the Smith family along with Joseph's widow Emma Smith and his children continued to live in Nauvoo, Illinois; refusing to join any of the various groups.

In addition to the larger groups mentioned above, there were hundreds of scattered small groups of Saints who maintained their independence from any of the larger Restoration (Mormon) organizations. Some of these groups were barely two or three families, while others were large congregations or communities.

All of the various groups continued to identify themselves as the 'true church of Jesus Christ'. Eventually the many diverse groups found it necessary to differentiate themselves from other 'Mormon' organizations which they considered apostate and heretical.

For those who followed Brigham Young, the movement continued to be identified as the 'only true church of Jesus Christ'. The 'kingdom' which was built in Utah is a whole different story. However, to this day, this exclusive theological approach remains as the basis for identity within the modern Utah Mormon Church.

In 1852, several independent groups in the midwest banded together to start the 'Reorganization'. It was the purpose of this group to unify the various non-polygamous Restoration groups. The 'Reorganization' sent out letters and proclamations to all of the various groups; calling on

the Saints to join together and to reject the practice of polygamy and to wait for a new latter-day prophet to come forth from the posterity Joseph Smith. Many independent groups in the east and midwest responded to the call and joined together to form the second largest 'Mormon' organization. In 1860, Joseph Smith III became the leader of this group. Eventually all of the sons of Joseph Smith, Jr. joined the 'Reorganization'. For a number of years, the Smith family had rejected the invitations of various groups. The Smiths found it hard to except the practice of polygamy and some of the other new doctrines with origins from the Nauvoo period. They particularly reacted against the authoritarianism of Brigham Young's Utah kingdom. The 'Reorganization' rejected polygamy and offered a 'congregational-type' polity. This approach was more to their liking.

Joseph Smith III grew up uninterested in the religious movement of his father. Over the years he quickly dismissed and rejected the emissaries sent to him from various Restoration (Mormon) groups. His initial contacts and reactions to the 'Reorganized' group were no different. When Young Joseph came to the 1860 conference of the 'Reorganization' at Amboy, Illinois, he claimed to come in obedience to God:⁷

I came not here of myself, but by the influence of the Spirit. For sometime past I have received manifestations pointing to the position which I am about to assume.

The 'Reorganization' finally had the leader they had been waiting for.

⁷Joseph Smith III, "Conference Address" in Heman C. Smith (ed.) The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Independence, MO: Herald, 1951) 3:247.

The movement was quite successful under Joseph III, and grew rapidly in the midwestern area. A majority of the Saints in various groups and congregations in the east and midwest joined to be 'Reorganized'. The friction between the two largest groups began to grow as the sons of Joseph Smith began to preach in Utah and convert many to the 'Reorganization'. Those who were converted were no longer welcome in Utah and were forced by persecution to leave. By the late 1870's it became obvious that the majority of the Saints in Utah would not become 'Reorganized', having all the organization they wanted or needed under Brigham Young and the Council of Twelve. At this point a third point of identity began to develop among the Reorganized Saints, which involved a preoccupation with distinguishing themselves from Utah Mormonism and polygamy.

Between 1870 and 1960, identity for the Saints of the Reorganized Church could be summed up in the following three ideas:

1. We are the 'true church' of Jesus Christ restored.
2. We are a chosen people called to establish the City of Zion--the Kingdom of God on earth, prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
3. We are not connected with the 'Mormons' of Utah. We do not believe in polygamy nor do we practice any secret rites or ordinances.

As the Utah Mormon Church grew in numbers and influence, the members of the Reorganized Church were forced to differentiate themselves from the unpopular larger group. Therefore the negative identity of 'we are not Utah Mormons' began to receive an increasing emphasis. For many, the

whole mission of the church began to be an overriding concern to disprove Utah Mormonism and show it to be apostate and heretical. This stance was pressed upon the members of the Reorganized Church by critics who were unaware of the differences between the two 'Mormon' churches. Even today, members of the Saints Church normally find themselves having to explain the existence and beliefs of the Reorganized Church as opposed to the larger, better known Utah Mormon group.

During the 1960's and 1970's, the missions of the Saints Church expanded throughout the world. The church leaders began to direct the church away from the exclusive and negative points of identity which had characterized the movement for more than a hundred years. Dr. Wallace B. Smith, President of the Saints Church points this out in a recent interview reported in the Los Angeles Times:⁸

The RLDS Church 'in the past 15 to 20 years has made a very conscious effort to say we're really not interested in the Mormon border wars. We've got a message of our own.

This new direction involved a process of re-evaluating traditional stances, understandings, and points of identity. While many of the members were ready to leave the negative 'we are not the Mormons' identity behind, the exclusive and unique points of identity still appealed to a large number of the Saints. Polarization and disunity developed as articles and books were written by the leaders which challenged many of the traditions and beliefs which characterized the Saints

⁸Los Angeles Times, col. 5.

Church over the years. Some of the congregations refused to use any of the new program materials including the new Sunday school curriculum. It was a question of identity; many of the members wished to maintain the exclusive image that they were accustomed to. Recently President Wallace B. Smith was quoted as saying:⁹

There are some people in the church who simply find it very hard to accept that. (changes) It amounts to changing the rules, and if the rules are what have given you your meaning, to change the rules takes away the meaning or says that what you invested the meaning in was wrong.

In the new program materials, the church is identified as the 'Body of Christ' which is to minister in the world. The Saints Church is only a part of that 'Body of Christ' which includes the many Christian denominations. The new call of the Saints Church is to be a 'leaven' at work in the world and within the larger 'Body of Christ'.

The critics of the new direction have pointed out that the question of unique identity or reason for existence is never answered in the new materials, while all the old reasons and answers are negated. Critics are also quick to point to the phenomenal growth rate of the Utah Mormon Church, which continues to maintain an exclusive identity, in spite of the argument by many leaders of the Saints Church that such a stand is no longer tenable or relevant in today's world. The Saints Church on the other hand, decreased in its growth rate as the new direction toward an inclusive

⁹The Examiner (Independence) (April 5, 1980) special World Conference insert, p. 1, col. 4.

identity was introduced and implemented.

As the Saints Church entered the decade of the 1980's, a new church program was formulated and introduced called: 'Faith to Grow'. The emphasis of this program is church growth, both qualitative and quantitative. At the 1980 World Conference, Saints Church President Dr. Wallace B. Smith stated that all of the church programming, both local and world-wide should be planned with this new emphasis and program in mind:¹⁰

How does this fit into the Faith to Grow program? How is this church school class, or this worship service, . . .or whatever activity it is in which we are engaged fostering evangelism, a qualitative growth or quantitative expansion through a deep and abiding faith in God and His purposes?

The program materials, which present the theological foundation for the 'Faith to Grow' program, do not adequately address the problem of identity nor do they project a sense of unique purpose or mission for the Saints Church.

It is extremely important for the members of any group or organization to have a clear sense of identity and purpose. Otherwise, positive motivation towards group goals and objectives is difficult to achieve.

This project is a response to a recognizable need to define a unifying identity for the Saints Church. It is the hope of this project the results of this work will lay a

¹⁰From Wallace B. Smith, "In Christ Shall All Be Made Alive;" an address at the Saints 1980 World Conference, Independence, MO: April 6, 1980. World Conference Bulletin (1980) 262.

foundation for future program materials and bear fruit in providing a new sense of unique identity within the Saints Church.

PROJECT THESIS

The project thesis is that the Restoration (Mormon) concept of Zion can accommodate diverse theological viewpoints and provide a theological basis for unique common identity, purpose, and motivation within the Saints Church. A secondary thesis is that it is important for the members of a church to have a clear sense of identity and purpose in order to maintain positive membership motivation and organizational strength.

Zion is a name used by the Restoration (Mormon) Churches to refer to their idea of the Kingdom of God on earth. This term can refer to a condition, a process, a community, or a city.

Traditionally Zion is one of the unique goals and common characteristics of the Restoration (Mormon) Movement. As mentioned previously, it provided a major source and point of identity for the early Saints of the Restoration, and continues to be a significant idea in the Saints Church today.

Theologically, Zion falls into the category of eschatology. Zion is traditionally understood to be the final result of all the hopes, goals, and work of the Saints. It is to be a tangible example of the Kingdom of God on

earth; a necessary prelude to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

During the last twenty years, the idea of Zion has gone through a process of change, reinterpretation, and re-evaluation. In the Saints Church today, there is no common definition, use, or understanding of the term. Many members tend to define Zion as an exclusive city to be built by the Saints. Other members associate community service and development with the term. There is a running joke about Zion among the Saints: 'If you ask twenty members to define Zion, you'll probably get twenty-five different definitions'.

There has never been a comprehensive theological treatment of the idea of Zion within the Saints Church. This project proposes to fill that void and to explore the possibility that Zion might provide a context for inclusive common identity and unique expression and thus a basis for positive membership motivation.

MAJOR TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

There are a number of titles and terms which will be continually referred to in this project. The following definitions should be particularly helpful for those who are unfamiliar with the Restoration (Mormon) Movement.

The Restoration Movement

The Restoration Movement is a collective term which refers to the many churches, groups, and denominations which

trace their heritage and origins to a church founded by Joseph Smith, Jr., in the State of New York in 1830, called the Church of Christ.

Under the leadership of Smith, in the period of 1830-44, the membership of the church expanded at a phenomenal rate and established major communities at Kirtland, Ohio; Independence, Missouri; Farwest, Missouri; and finally at Commerce, Illinois; later renamed Nauvoo. During this period, the name of the church changed from the Church of Christ to the Church of Latter Day Saints and was finally renamed the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

After the death of Smith in 1844, the problem of leadership succession resulted in the inception of numerous groups and denominations which in turn have gone through a number of consolidations and schisms. The following are additional collective terms which refer to the Restoration Movement:

- The Restoration
- The Restoration Churches
- The Mormon Movement
- The Mormon Churches

The two largest Restoration groups are; The Saints Church, and the Utah Mormon Church.

The Saints Church

The Saints Church is the second largest of the Restoration groups with approximately 250,000 members around the world. It is officially known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, with world headquarters

in Independence, Missouri. The Saints Church is also known and referred to as:

- RLDS Church
- Reorganized Latter Day Saints
- The Reorganized Church
- The Reorganized Mormon Church
- The Missouri Mormon Church
- The Josephites (followers of Joseph Smith III)

'The Saints' is an official abbreviation adopted by the World Conference of 1972. This group is the primary concern of the project.

The Utah Mormon Church

The Utah Mormon Church, officially named the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is the largest Restoration group with over four million members world wide. The headquarters of this church is in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Utah Mormon Church is also known and referred to as:

- The Mormons
- L.D.S. Church
- The Latter-day Saints
- The Utah Church
- The Brighamites (Followers of Brigham Young)

The Restoration Scriptures

The Restoration Scriptures are a unique part of the Restoration Movement. Besides the Bible, Restoration Churches recognize additional works which are considered as part of the scriptural canon. These works include:

- The Book of Mormon
- The Doctrine and Covenants
- The Inspired Version of the Bible (R.L.D.S.)
- The Pearl of Great Price (Utah Church)

The Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon first printed in 1830 at the founding of the movement by Joseph Smith, Jr. The name of the book provided nonmembers with a convenient nickname for the new religious group--'Mormons'. The Book of Mormon professes to be a scriptural record of several groups of early people who migrated to the Western Hemisphere from the Near East. All of the Restoration groups share this extracanonical book, although each may print their own version.

The Book of Doctrine and Covenants

The Doctrine and Covenants is a collection of official documents which contain modern prophesy, church rules, polity, and guidance written by Joseph Smith, Jr. and his successors in the church Presidency. The first edition was printed in 1835. The Saints Church and the Utah Mormon Church each print their own expanded version of the original book.

The Saints Church edition of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants continues to expand as contemporary leaders of the church present official documents for consideration. The most recent addition, written by President Wallace B. Smith, was presented to and accepted by the 1982 World Conference.

The Inspired Version, or the Holy Scriptures

The Inspired Version of the Bible is a revision of the King James version produced by Joseph Smith, Jr. with the help of Sidney Rigdon. In this version of the Bible,

various passages were interpreted, rewritten, and expanded to clarify the meaning. The writers believed that they were inspired by God to make this revision, thus it was called the 'Inspired Version'.

The Inspired Version was not printed during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, Jr., the manuscripts were preserved by his widow, Emma Smith, and were given to his son Joseph Smith, III, who became the President of the Saints Church in 1860. The first edition was printed by the Saints Church in 1866. The Utah Mormon Church later published and canonized a small portion of this work in the Pearl of Great Price.

World Conference

The World Conference is the main legislative body of the Saints Church. Delegates are chosen and sent from all the congregations and missions of the Saints Church around the world. Budgetary, doctrinal, and missional issues are considered during this eight day conference which is held in the spring of every even year at the headquarters in Independence, Missouri.

The First Presidency

The First Presidency is the leading quorum of the church. It contains the three Presidents of the Church; the President and Prophet, and his two counselors who are also called Presidents. The First Presidency, as the head of the church, directs the movement and interprets or delivers the word of God to the Saints in this generation.

The Council of Twelve

The Council of Twelve is the second leading quorum of the church. It contains twelve members who are called Apostles. This Council directs the world missions and evangelistic ministry of the church.

Group and Church Identity

Chapter two and three will explore and define group and church identity. For the purposes of this project the following is a simple definition of group identity: A common character, goal, or origin which defines or unifies a group. Church identity may be defined as: the history, traditions, beliefs, and unique practices of a church which form a basis for a common unique character or goal.

MAJOR SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

There are a number of important sources which will be helpful in analyzing the identity problem of the Saints Church and in defining the Saints idea of Zion.

The Restoration Scriptures are among the primary sources to be examined. An article written by James A. Sanders: "Hermeneutics In True and False Prophecy", provides several important ideas which will be utilized in scriptural exegesis.¹¹ The methodology of Professor Sanders will be

¹¹James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy," in George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (eds.) Canon and Authority (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 21-41.

especially helpful in analyzing and applying Zionic scriptural sources to the present contextual reality.

An Introduction to the Saints Church by Peter A. Judd and A. Bruce Lindgren, is a basic introduction to the history, theology, organization, and practices of the church.¹² Exploring the Faith by the Saints Basic Beliefs Committee, contains the current statements or guidelines on church beliefs and theology.¹³ Concepts of Zion edited by Paul Wellington, is a collection of diverse views and definitions of the Saints idea of Zion.¹⁴

There are a number of articles and papers which are important in surveying the historical and theological context of the past and present in the Saints Church. Two articles by Alma R. Blair deal with the historical context and identity of the Saints Church: "Historical Modes of the Reorganization"¹⁵ and "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints: Moderate Mormons."¹⁶ Howard J. Booth documents a shift in the direction and theology of the Saints Church in

¹²Peter A. Judd and A. Bruce Lindgren, An Introduction to the Saints Church (Independence, MO: Herald, 1976).

¹³Committee on Basic Beliefs, Exploring the Faith (Independence, MO: Herald, 1970).

¹⁴Paul Wellington (ed.) Concepts of Zion (Independence, MO: Herald, 1973).

¹⁵Alma R. Blair, "Historical Models of the Reorganization," Commission (September 1979) 20-5.

¹⁶F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards (eds.) The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1973) pp. 207-30.

his paper on the new direction: "Shifts in Restoration Thought."¹⁷ An article by Clifford A. Cole, "The World Church Our Mission in the 1980's", summarizes historical contexts of the past with a look at current issues which might affect the church in the decade ahead.¹⁸ Barbara Higdon in her article, "The Reorganization in the Twentieth Century", summarizes some of the issues and changes which have affected¹⁹ the identity of the church in the twentieth century, with a focus on the changes in direction in the last twenty years. The Saints Church historian, Richard P. Howard, presents an analysis of the development of early RLDS identity and the historical context in, "In Illinois, 1852-82: Search for Identity."²⁰

A set of papers containing the theological basis for the new 'Faith to Grow' program was presented to the full-time leadership of the Saints Church by the First Presidency during the week of January 9, 1979. These unpublished papers are quite important in containing some of the current positions and thinking of key leaders and executive ministers within

¹⁷Howard J. Booth, "Shifts in Restoration Thought," in Maurice L. Draper and Clare D. Vlahos (eds.) Restoration Studies I: A Collection of Essays about the History, Beliefs, and Practices of the R.L.D.S. (Independence, MO: Herald, 1980).

¹⁸Cole, pp. 41-7.

¹⁹Barbara Higdon, "The Reorganization in the Twentieth Century," Dialogue VIII:1 (Spring 1972) 94-100.

²⁰Richard P. Howard, "The R.L.D.S. Church in Illinois, 1852-82; Search for Identity," Dialogue V:1 (Spring 1970) 62-75.

the church.²¹

Insights from the following sources will be helpful in exploring the problem of Church identity: A Nation of Behavers by Martin E. Marty;²² Why Conservative Churches Are Growing by Dean M. Kelley;²³ and Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1979, edited by Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen.²⁴ "Foundations of the Theory of Organizations," by Phillip Selznick,²⁵ Management for your Church by Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck,²⁶ plus additional sociological theories on organizations will provide an understanding of organizational identity which can be applied to the Saints Church.

Wolfhart Pannenberg's approach to eschatology will be examined and utilized in writing a 'Theology of Zion'. The writings of other contemporary theologians such as; John Cobb, and Gustavo Gutierrez, will also be studied and referred to in order to sharpen the discussion and by way of comparison.

²¹The First Presidency (ed.) Six papers presented to the appointee and executive leaders of the Saints Church, January 9 & 10, 1979.

²²Martin E. Marty, A Nation of Behavers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976)

²³Dean M. Kelley, Why Conservative Churches Are Growing (New York: Harper & Row, 1972)

²⁴Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen (eds.) Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1979 (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979)

²⁵Phillip Selznick, "Foundations of the Theory of Organizations," in Joseph A. Litterer (ed.) Organizations: Systems, Control and Adaptation (New York: Wiley, 1969)

²⁶Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck, Management for Your Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977)

PROJECT SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This project will focus solely upon the Restoration (Mormon) idea of Zion as a possible theological context for unique expression and common identity within the Saints Church. It does not propose to address the problems of external image or to present any other possible points of identity within the traditions and theology of the Saints Church.

The geographical emphasis of this project is to be limited to the domestic field (U.S.A. and Canada). For the foreign congregations and missions of the Saints Church; the question of church identity is best defined by the various indigenous leaders within the cultures represented.

It would be impossible to form a final solution to the complex problems which related to church identity within the Saints Church. The goal is to present a possible theological context upon which church members of divergent viewpoints can meet in tentative agreement and find a common group identity and cause.

PROJECT INTEGRATION AND DESIGN

The two curricular disciplines to be integrated by this project are Theology and Church Management. In the field of Theology; contemporary eschatological thought, along with theological, historical, and scriptural sources of the Saints Church, will be studied and used in providing the basis for a 'Theology of Zion'. Within the functional

discipline of Church Management; sociological theories of group and organizational identity will be considered and used in analyzing the identity problem of the Saints Church. Church Management theories will also be utilized in assessing the possible implications that the 'Theology of Zion' might have on church organizational strength.

The primary methods of study will include library research into appropriate sources and field study at the Saints World Conference of April 1980.

In Chapter Two, individual and organizational identity will be defined and sociological theories on organizational behavior and the Systems Theory will be explored.

Chapter Three will define church identity and explore problems and issues related to church organizational strength.

Chapter Four will contain a survey of historical and contemporary eschatological thought. Pannenberg's approach will be emphasized and compared to several other contemporary theologians.

Chapter Five will present a 'Theology of Zion' as an eschatological approach to unique identity for the Saints Church.

Chapter Six will summarize the entire study and it will contain recommendations for the possible future use of the materials contained in this project.

Chapter 2

DEFINING IDENTITY

Identity is a word which has filtered its way from T.V. talk shows, paperback books, Reader's Digest, Parents' Magazine, and Psychology Today, into our every day common language. Our children are in the middle of 'identity formation'; our neighbor, who recently retired, is going through an 'identity crisis'; our remote teenager is probably suffering from 'identity diffusion', except on those days when he rebelliously chooses a 'negative identity'. Over dinner with our friends, we constantly discuss or refer to the various groups or causes that we 'identify with'.

Just what is 'identity'? In asking this question, this project is not seeking to explore the vernacular use of this word among investigators, or detectives. It is the diverse definitions of identity among Psychologists, Sociologists, and Social Scientists that will be examined in this chapter.

DEFINING INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

When one considers 'identity', the name of Erik H. Erikson automatically comes to mind. This section will explore his approach to individual identity and also the definitions of Allen Wheelis and Sidney E. Mead.

Erik H. Erikson--Identity and The Life Cycle

In Identity and The Life Cycle, Erikson defines identity in two ways; 'personal identity' and 'ego identity'.

'Personal identity' is the perception that oneself is an individual entity with sameness and continuity in time and the realization that others may also recognize one's sameness and continuity.¹

'Ego identity' may be defined as the process in which the ego develops within a social context or reality and moves toward adapting to a tangible collective future.² 'Ego identity' for Erikson is linked to his understanding of eight crisis stages in 'the life cycle'. He refers to a process of ego identity formation which is to be completed within the first five stages of human development from infancy through late adolescence. Such a process includes a gradual integration of all identifications, however, the whole is definitely different than just the sum of all its parts. It is in his understanding of 'Ego Identity' that Erikson relates individual identity to social organization and also individual identity to group identity.⁴

In exploring group identity, Erikson notes the natural formation of an ideological system which he defines as:⁵

¹Erik H. Erikson, Identity and The Life Cycle (New York: International Universities Press, 1959) p. 23.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 90.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁵Ibid., p. 157.

a coherent body of shared images, ideas, and ideals which. . .provides for the participants a coherent, . . .over-all orientation in space and time, in means and ends.

The word 'ideology'; does not have a particularly good reputation. Erikson recognizes that the exclusiveness and totalism of some ideologies may allow the superego 'to regain its territory from identity.'⁶ Diverse ideologies by their very nature are incongruous and result in polarization, crisis, and conflict. Nevertheless, Erikson sees 'identity' and 'ideology' as two aspects of the same process:⁷

Both provide the necessary condition for further individual maturation and, with it, for the next higher form of identification, namely, the solidarity linking common identities

Allen Wheelis--The Quest for Identity

In his work, The Quest for Identity, Wheelis contends that a clear and stable sense of identity is difficult to achieve in the twentieth century because values are no longer stable and "Values determine goals, and goals define identity."⁸ It is through the pursuit and commitment to goals that one finds in life a sense of meaning and purpose and therefore an identity.⁹

Wheelis defines identity as ". . .a coherent sense of self." For Wheelis, identity involves a stable relationship between ones' values and actions. This produces a sense

⁶Ibid., p. 158. ⁷Ibid., p. 157.

⁸Allen Wheelis, The Quest for Identity (New York: Norton, 1958) p. 174.

⁹Ibid., p. 87.

of wholeness, integration, and purpose--life makes sense.¹⁰

A firm sense of 'identity', according to Wheelis, is able to survive major conflict.¹¹ It also presupposes a stable supporting foundation and brings direction and meaning to life: "A firm sense of identity provides both a compass to determine one's course in life and ballast to keep one steady."¹²

Sidney E. Mead--History and Identity

Mead introduces identity as: "a matter of self knowledge or understanding one's self."¹³ Individual identity for Mead cannot be separated from group associations or group identity. He suggests that "the individual is a process immersed in a larger process"--"We all live and move and have our being in communities."¹⁴

Mead's primary definition of identity includes group reference: "a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others--the maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group."¹⁵ A stable identity, according to Mead, depends upon feeling an inner solidarity with a community which (one believes) transcends all and gives one a clear comprehension of life,--past, present, and future.¹⁶

¹⁰Ibid., p. 19. ¹¹Ibid. ¹²Ibid., p. 21

¹³Sidney E. Mead, History and Identity (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979) p. 11.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid. ¹⁶Ibid., p. 13.

DEFINING ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY

Group or organizational identity is an extension of individual identity. However, organizational identity is not the sum total of all those individuals involved, but has a real and unique character of its own. As in individual identity; identity for organizations and groups involves a coherent sense of purpose, meaning, values, goals, means, and ends.

This section will examine organizational theory and systems theory for insight concerning group identity.

Organizational Theory and Identity

The following segment is designed to explore organizational theory and identity. It will begin with defining what an organization is and how group identity relates to organizational behavior.

Defining Organizations and Identity. There are many simple definitions in organizational theory which point to identity. Organizations according to Phillip Selznick are; "ordered instruments for the achievement of stated goals."¹⁷ Amitai Etzioni defines organizations as; "social units which pursue specific goals."¹⁸ The defining characteristic of an

¹⁷ Philip Selznick, "Foundations of the Theory of Organization," in Joseph A. Letterer (ed.) Organizations: Systems, Control and Adaptation (New York: Wiley, 1969) 2:358.

¹⁸ Amitai Etzioni, Modern Organizations (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964) p. 3.

organization, according to Talcott Parsons is the. . ."primary orientation to the attainment of a specific goal. . ."19

Identity is the primary organizational characteristic; a coherent sense of purpose towards attainment of a specific goal or goals. It is the main reason for being, a unique reservoir of values and meaning, the major unifying principle.

An organization of course, is more than just a purpose or an identity. An organization includes people who, are able to communicate with each other, and are willing to contribute. The three primary characteristics or elements of an organization are therefore:²⁰

1. Communication
2. Willingness to serve
3. Common purpose (identity)

Formal action is the result of communication and the willingness to serve within an organization. This is 'the means' of the organization. The common purpose, commitment, or identity provides the direction, the goals and objectives-- 'the ends'. Lon L. Fuller describes these 'means and ends' as "the glue that hold together" and titles them, "Two Principles of Human Association":²¹

¹⁹Talcott Parsons, "Suggestions for a Sociological Approach to Theory of Organizations," in Amitai Etzioni (ed.) A Sociological Reader on Complex Organizations (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969) p. 33.

²⁰Chester I. Barnard, "A Theory of Cooperation and Organization," in Albert H. Rubenstein and Chadwick J. Haberstroh (eds.) (Homewood, IL: Irwin, 1966) p. 97.

²¹Lon L. Fuller, "Two Principles of Human Association," in J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (eds.) Voluntary Associations (New York: Atherton Press, 1969) p. 6.

1. Shared Commitment
2. Legal principle

The 'legal principle' includes not only communication, but the formal rules of duty and association, which enables the organization to function. Fuller views these two principles as having both a complimentary and an adversary relationship--"a relation of polarity--they fight and reinforce each other at the same time."²²

The two principles reinforce each other in goal oriented tasks which compliment the official purpose and identity of the organization. However, there are occasions in organizational behavior when the legal principle might demand action which is counter-productive in terms of the official organizational purpose. This type of action would be called for in the name of organizational maintenance and structural stability.

Goal Distortion and Displacement. There is always the danger that the 'legal principle' will dominant the organization and become the 'real' goal of the organization --an end in itself. Examples of this process may be found among various philanthropic organizations which expend the vast majority of their funds upon administrative expenses. This is a distortion of goals and identity or in a severe case--goal displacement.²³

²²Ibid., p. 8.

²³Etzioni, Modern Organizations, p. 10.

The daily business of an organization may center around internal problems and activities which consume a large portion of the time and energy of the participants. Such administrative duties may become the real priority, for those involved, rather than the actual professed organizational goals.²⁴

Goal Succession and Expansion. Sometimes it is necessary for organization to form a new goal or goals in the place of the 'original'. If the old goal or goals have been obtained or if they are unattainable; goal succession is necessary for organizational survival. In other cases it is advantageous for an organization to expand and add new goals to the present 'official' ones. This can be successful if the goals are congruent and complementary.²⁵

Multi-purpose Organizations. There are many organizations which serve two or more goals at the same time. Churches, which have diverse spiritual purposes and social goals, fall into this organizational category. Conflicts are unavoidable within multi-purpose organizations. Priorities must be established to mediate the incompatible demands of various goals for the limited resources available.²⁶

Just as multi-purpose organizations have several goals, identity for such groups may be multi-faceted. In

²⁴Ibid., p. 12.

²⁵Ibid., p. 13.

²⁶Ibid., p. 15.

multi-purpose organizations one can speak of identity in terms of having multiple and/or separate 'points'.

Organizational Effectiveness. Effectiveness is determined by goal achievement or relative progress towards the goal. Efficiency is measured by the amount of resources needed to produce some kind of organizational output which is related to the goal or goals. Organizational survival depends upon effectiveness and efficiency and 'the maintenance of an equilibrium" between them.²⁷

When effectiveness decreases or comes to a halt, the willingness of individuals to contribute to the organization declines or discontinues.²⁸

This willingness requires the belief that the purpose can be carried out, a faith that diminishes to the vanishing point as it appears that it is not in fact in process

Organizational Efficiency. Efficiency involves an interchange between the individuals and the organization. If working within the organization, the satisfaction for the individual do not exceed the necessary sacrifices required, then individual willingness to contribute will decline or cease--this is organizational inefficiency. However, if the satisfactions are greater than the sacrifices, then willingness will continue and the result will be--organizational efficiency.²⁹

²⁷Ibid., pp. 8-9, Bernard, p. 97.

²⁸Bernard, ibid. ²⁹Ibid.

Organizational Motivation. The relationship of organizational effectiveness and efficiency to individual commitment and motivation has been noted. However, there are additional ways that motivation is affected.

As organizational members begin to internalize group values, norms, and goals, a process of socialization is in effect which results in individual identification with the organizational mission or goals. Positive motivation is derived from this process of complete or partial internalization of organizational goals.³⁰

To explain this process in different language; members need a clear sense of organizational identity and goals in order to be motivated:³¹

As a group member, the subject who had a clear picture of his group goal and group path experienced greater feelings of group--belongingness, particularly as manifested in an involvement with the group goal and sympathy with group emotions.

Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn suggest that participating in group decisions, actions, and accomplishments are important additional factors which may contribute to membership internalization of group objectives and therefore positive individual motivation and identification.³²

³⁰Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations (New York: Wiley, 1966) p. 367.

³¹Bertram H. Raven and Jan Rietsema, "The Effects of Varied Clarity of Group Goal and Group Path Upon the Individual and His Relation to His Group," in Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander (eds.) Group Dynamics: Research and Theory (New York: Harper & Row, 1960) p. 412.

³²Katz and Kahn, p. 367.

Sources of Intra-Organizational Conflict. Clagett

G. Smith identifies the following sources of conflict within organizations:³³

1. problems of communications between the parties involved,
2. differences in basic interest and goals, and
3. a lack of shared perceptions and attitudes among members at different echelons.

Our understanding of identity is involved in #2 and #3. Differences in goals and shared perceptions may derive from different and possible conflicting definitions of organizational identity.

Organizational Maintenance. Philip Selznick lists five 'imperatives' for organizational maintenance, continuity and integrity:³⁴

1. The Security of the Organization as a whole in relation to Social Forces in its environment. . .
2. The Stability of the Lines of Authority and Communication. . .
3. The Stability of Informal Relations within the Organization. . .
4. The Continuity of Policy and of the Sources of its Determination. . .
5. A Homogeneity of Outlook with respect to the meaning and role of the organization.

Of these 'imperatives', #5 related directly to organizational identity. A homogeneous sense of organizational identity strengthens, helps to maintain the stability of the organization, and provides positive membership motivation.³⁵

³³Clagett G. Smith, "A Comparative Analysis of Some Conditions and Consequences of Intra-Organizational Conflict," in Litterer, 2:379.

³⁴Selznick, p. 362. ³⁵Ibid.

Selznick also concludes that healthy organizations are able to transmit organizational identity to new members, require integration, and maintain homogeneity:³⁶

. . .one of the signs of "healthy" organizations is the ability to effectively orient new members and readily slough off those who cannot be adopted to the established outlook.

The theoretical research of this section definitely supports the secondary thesis of this project--that a clear sense of identity and purpose is important in order to maintain positive membership motivation and organizational strength.

Systems Theory and Identity

A systems approach to organizations is an adaptation of the work of von Bertalanffy and others in the area of biology and physical science to the field of social science. Organizations are identified as 'open-systems' within a larger environment. An organization from a systems perspective is a set of components which work together to accomplish a particular objective. Such a system has a unique boundary which distinguishes it from its environment.³⁷ Like all systems; organizations import energy from the environment, transform it into a unique product, and export it back into the environment again.³⁸

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck, Management For Your Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978) p. 32.

³⁸Katz and Kahn, p. 28.

A systems approach recognizes the importance of social environment and the essential process of feedback from that environment. It also addresses the interrelatedness and interdependency of the organization and its people. Traditional theory focuses upon the organizational goals and accomplishment. Systems theory considers organizational growth and goal achievement and individual growth and goal achievement within the organization, to be of equal importance.³⁹

The following are the components which make up an organizational system:⁴⁰

1. Input System
2. Transforming System
3. Output System
4. Environment
5. Boundary
6. Feedback Loop

Input System. The input system takes in raw materials from the environment into the organization. This may include; new personnel or members, money, technology, materials, or any other necessary item.⁴¹

The Transforming System. Organizational systems use the energy available to them from the input system and integrate and transform it into a new product, or service.⁴² The transforming System within the organization is comprised of the three following parts:⁴³

³⁹Lindgren and Shawchuck, p. 24. ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 34.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 35. ⁴²Katz and Kahn, p. 20.

⁴³Lindgren and Shawchuck, pp. 35-36.

1. Organizational Goals & Identity
2. Organizational Structures
3. Organizational Intra-and Interpersonal Relationships

The Output System. Organizational systems export some product or service into the environment. Such exports may change or influence the environment in some way.⁴⁴

Environment. The environment of a system is made up of all the systems that influence it, or any systems which the system is trying to influence. An organizational system is therefore interrelated and interdependent with other systems in its environment. Any environmental change calls for, and demands an adjustment or response from the organizational system.⁴⁵

Boundary. There are major differences that separate the diverse systems within an environment, this differentiation is called the system boundary. The organizational systems boundary is defined by its unique identity more than anything else. Although differences may include physical or geographical characteristics; it is tradition, history, values, and beliefs which provides a unique atmosphere for the system.⁴⁶

It is the task of the boundary to filter all raw materials entering the system and the materials leaving. This way the system will only receive those materials that

⁴⁴Katz and Kahn, p. 20; Lindgren and Shawchuck, p. 37.

⁴⁵Lindgren and Shawchuck pp. 38-39.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 39-40.

it can use and transformed material needed for organizational functions.⁴⁷ Decisions which affect the system boundary are among the most controversial and emotional propositions to be faced by an organization because there is always the risk of altering the identity of the System.⁴⁸

Feedback Loop. The feedback loop provides information to the organization concerning its state of health and its relationships to its environment. The organizational system needs to constantly collect information concerning its environment including other systems which affect and influence the input system and those who receive from the output system. It is the Feedback Loop which collects data from the environment, evaluates the product, and determines the relative success or failure of the organization in relation to its goals and objectives.⁴⁹

Entropy, Negative Entropy, and Homeostasis. The entropic process is considered a universal law of nature. This law states that all forms of organization move towards disorganization or death. This is particularly demonstratable among biological forms.⁵⁰

The open system may import more energy from its environment than it exports or uses; thereby storing energy for survival. This process is called Negative Entropy.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 40.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Katz and Kahn, p. 21.

Open systems are characterized by a steady state due to negative entropy. This steady state or condition is called Homeostasis.⁵¹

Over a period of time, open systems which achieve negative entropy and homeostasis, tend to store up energy in larger amounts than needed for a minimal margin of safety and this results in growth and expansion. During a process of growth and expansion, systems are able to maximize and emphasize their basic character and identity.⁵²

Systems Theory and Identity--Conclusions. Systems theory provides a helpful theoretical framework for viewing organizational structure and analyzing organizational action and relationships.

Organizational identity is found in the 'transforming system' and is involved in defining the 'boundary'. This will be examined further in the next chapter in defining and exploring church identity from a Systems perspective.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 23

⁵²Ibid., pp. 24-25.

Chapter 3

DEFINING AND EXPLORING CHURCH IDENTITY

In Chapter Two, the theoretical approaches to defining individual and organizational identity were explored. This chapter will utilize some of those theories in defining church identity and exploring important issues related to identity, religion, the church and the individual.

RELIGION, THE CHURCH, AND INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY

Identity and religion are closely related. Identity formation involves the following questions: Who am I? What is the meaning and purpose in life? What are my values and goals? What will give me direction in my life? Religion provides formal answers to these questions. L. Shannon Jung offers the following observation.¹

Religious experience, mediated through the denomination, enables people to discover the meaning and purpose of human existence. Religion provides an answer to the "why?" of any person's life; it offers general directions, explanations of a person's nature and destiny, and ways that questions of meaning have been answered in the past. It enables a person to evaluate actions, goals, one's occupation, and even one's stance towards the society. Thus it assists an individual in coming to a sense of self.

Religion helps the individual in one's search for a transcendent purpose or meaning in life. People seek for a

¹L. Shannon Jung, Identity and Community (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), p. 94.

deeper understanding which transcends the here and now realities. Religion supplies people with a vision and an ultimate meaning which allows them to reinterpret present reality and look beyond.²

Religion also relates the individual to others through religious groups and churches. It is in relating to others with similar values and beliefs that one finds support for one's own sense of identity and a common identity and community. Sidney Mead suggests that, in order to understand an individual's identity, it is necessary to examine the make up of one's community:³

We all live and move and have our being in communities. In Whitehead's phrase, the individual is a process immersed in a larger process--and there is no definite line where the community leaves off and the individual begins.

For Mead, individual identity includes a sense of solidarity or belonging with a group.⁴ In this same regard, Erik Erikson refers to group identity and ideology as: ". . .the next higher form of identification, namely, the solidarity linking common identities."⁵ A church can provide the individual with a larger process, a community, an ideology, and a common group identity.

²Ibid., p. 90.

³Sidney E. Mead, History and Identity (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979)

⁴Ibid.

⁵Erik H. Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle (New York: International Universities Press, 1959) p. 157.

CHURCH IDENTITY: AN ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Churches, like all organizations, are made up of people with a common purpose who are able to communicate with each other, and are willing to contribute.⁶ In this section, organizational theory, as previously presented, will be applied to church identity.

In chapter two it was established that any organization has two major elements; 'the means' and 'the ends'. Lon L. Fuller calls these elements:⁷

1. Share commitment
2. Legal principle

Church identity is located in the element of shared commitment, which contains a coherent sense of purpose, meaning, values and goals--the unique character of the organization--'the ends'.

The 'legal principle' is the element which allows the church to function; the 'means' of the organization. This element includes; the formal rules of duty and association, communication, and voluntary service.

The Church--A Multi-Purpose Organization

Churches have diverse spiritual purposes, values, and

⁶Chester I. Barnard, "A Theory of Cooperation and Organization," in Albert H. Rubenstein and Chadwick J. Haberstroh (eds.) Some Theories of Organization (Homewood, IL: Irwin, 1966) p. 97.

⁷Lon L. Fuller, "Two Principles of Human Association," in J. Roland Penrock and John W. Chapman (eds.) Voluntary Associations (New York: Atherton Press, 1969) p. 6.

social goals; therefore they are multi-purpose organizations. Identity for such groups is multi-faceted. Unique church identity usually contains multiple or separate parts or 'points'.⁸

Church Identity and Mission

Church identity usually serves a major role in defining the church mission, goals, and priorities. However the 'legal principle' may affect church mission and goals in such a way that goal distortion and even displacement may occur in varying degrees within some churches.⁹

It is even more common for churches to be affected by mission and goal succession or expansion. Contextual changes in church environment may require a change in missional goals or the addition of new goals.¹⁰ If the new goals are congruent and complementary with the old goals, then church identity will be unaffected. However, if the new missional goals are radically different, it may indicate an actual change in church identity.

Church Identity and Motivation

In churches, as in other organizations, effectiveness and efficiency influences membership commitment and motivation. This process was explained in Chapter Two.

⁸Amitai Etzioni, Modern Organizations (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964) p. 15.

⁹Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 13.

In order to be motivated and committed to the mission of a church: members need to have a clear sense of church identity and goals, they need to feel that the goals are obtainable and the mission is worthwhile. They need to internalize and identify with church beliefs, practices, goals, mission, and identity.¹¹ Again, this section, directly relates to and supports the secondary thesis of this project (see the 'Project Thesis' in chapter one).

CHURCH IDENTITY: A SYSTEMS APPROACH

Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck analyzes the church from a systems perspective in their book; Management For Your Church: A Systems Approach. They list six components which make up an organizational system.¹²

1. Input System
2. Transforming System
3. Output System
4. Environment
5. Boundary
6. Feedback Loop

These six components have been defined and explained in the section on Systems Theory in chapter two.

Lindgren and Shawchuck locate church identity in the transforming process and discover its effects within the Boundary component.

¹¹Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations (New York: Wiley, 1966) p. 367.

¹²Alvin J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck, Management For Your Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977) p. 34.

Church Identity and The Transforming Process

In Analyzing the composition of the Transforming Process; Lindgren and Shawchuck identify three separate factors:¹³

1. Theological-Missional Purpose
2. Organizational Structures
3. Intra-Interpersonal Relationships

These three factors are in a continual dynamic relationship to one another.¹⁴

Church identity is primarily defined in the first factor--'theological-missional purposes'. It is here that unique organizational identity is determined by the particular history, values, and the theological-scriptural beliefs of the church. The focus is upon its ultimate goals and purpose. The theological and missional understanding of a church affects every area of a church's life and being. It is the key factor in the transformation process and affects both the organizational structures and the Intra-Interpersonal relationships.¹⁵

Church Identity and The Boundary Component

The Boundary of a church within its environment is defined by its differentiation from other systems. The major differences between systems are found in the tradition, history, beliefs, values, and emotions which define a totally unique

¹³Ibid., pp. 35-36.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

climate or identity. The boundary serves as a filter for the church, sorting out the acceptable and unacceptable inputs.¹⁶ According to Lindgren and Shawchuck, a boundary which filters very little, or too much, can both be problematic:¹⁷

We are all no doubt aware of churches that have filtered in so much of the environment they have lost their unique identity and sense of purpose. On the other hand, there are churches that are so closed as to be out of touch with, and unresponsive to, pressing needs and opportunities for ministry.

CHURCH IDENTITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH: SOME TRENDS, ISSUES, AND PERSPECTIVES

There are a number of important issues which relate to church identity and organizational strength. Sociologists, historians, church growth researchers, and theological commentators provide diverse and sometimes conflicting views on the effects of identity on church behavior and strength. The following sections will explore different issues and the correlation of church identity and strength in Intra/Inter Church relations and cultural relativity.

Church Identity and Intra-Church Behavior

According to organizational theory, it would seem to be important for a church to achieve a clear and homogeneous sense of identity. Different and possibly conflicting

¹⁶Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 40.

definitions of church identity are sources of intra-organizational conflict and instability.¹⁸

Selznick associates homogeneous identity with stability, strength, and membership motivation.¹⁹ His theory indicates that the mark of a healthy church is the ability to transmit a clear sense of identity to new members, require complete integration, and maintain homogeneity.²⁰

Dean M. Kelley supports Selznicks theory in his major work on church growth.²¹ Kelley associates church social strength and vitality with homogeneity, exclusivity and strictness. Weak churches, according to Kelley, are more lenient and inclusive. His main hypothesis is:²²

A group with evidences of social strength will proportionately show traits of strictness; a group with traits of leniency will proportionately show evidences of social weakness rather than strength.

Intra-church behavior and relationships tend to be affected by a church's identity positioning along a culturally distinctive--conformative continuum. Distinctive churches, as defined by Kelley, tend to be strict and absolute. Conformity is expected and demanded of the membership.

¹⁸Clagett G. Smith, "A Comparative Analysis of Some Conditions and Consequences of Intra-Organizational Conflict," in Joseph A. Litterer (ed.) Organizations: Systems Control and Adaptations (New York: Wiley, 1969) 2:379.

¹⁹Phillip Selznick, "Foundations of the Theory of Organization," in Litterer, 2:362.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Dean M. Kelley, Why Conservative Churches Are Growing (New York: Harper & Row, 1977)

²²Ibid., p. 86.

Homogeneity of beliefs and practices, is maintained, no deviation or dissent is tolerated.²³ Through stringency (which is social pressure maintained among the membership) and stricture (which is formally imposed by the leadership), the members of distinctive churches are expected to identify completely with the church and maintain a unique life-style.²⁴ Churches which are more culturally conformative tend to be more lenient in their demands on membership behavior. Divergent views are not only tolerated but may even be solicited. Individuality is appreciated more than conformity and discipline is mostly optional--a matter for one's own conscience.²⁵

Are Selznick and Kelley totally correct in their theories on organizational and church strength? Research in church growth has identified a variety of factors which could contribute to church organizational strength and membership commitment, including contextual factors over which the church has little or no control.²⁶ Selznick and Kelley concern themselves primarily with institutional factors.

Research completed by Dean R. Hoge and a panel of 'experts' tends to support several of the factors which Kelley stressed as necessary for Church strength and growth. Emphasis on evangelism, distinctive life style, and homogeneous beliefs and values, were shown to be among the

²³Ibid., p. 84. ²⁴Ibid., pp. 109-11. ²⁵Ibid., pp. 83-85.

²⁶David A. Roozen and Jackson W. Carroll, "Recent Trends in Church Membership and Participation: An Introduction," in Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen (eds.) Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978 (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979) p. 39.

strongest correlates.²⁷ Does this mean that churches need to be conservative, authoritarian, exclusive, and ignore social action, in order to be strong?

Theology and Church Strength. Doctrinal beliefs and values have been shown to have a moderately strong influence on membership commitment.²⁸ It is inconclusive, however, whether conservative stances are necessary for church strength. Although conservative churches now tend to be growing faster than more liberal ones; this has not always been the case historically. Contextual factors are definitely affecting the current trends. Robert A. Evans identifies a theological middle ground which can provide a better balance between faithfulness to God and organizational effectiveness.²⁹ He asks the question whether the measure of 'real' church strength lies in church growth or faithfulness to God. He answers that faithfulness should be the goal; effectiveness, the means and measurement.³⁰ John E. Biersdorf studied thirty-six religious groups which were good examples of religious vitality. He found that Kelley's emphasis on distinctive meaning was supported by his research; but that

²⁷Dean R. Hoge, "A Test of Theories of Denominational Growth and Decline", in *ibid.*, p. 192.

²⁸Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen, "Research on Factors Influencing Church Commitment," in *ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

²⁹Robert A. Evans "Recovering the Church's Transforming Middle: Theological Reflections on the Balance Between Faithfulness and Effectiveness," in *ibid.*, pp. 288-314.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 295.

the meaning and belief system did not need to be conservative in order for the group to be strong.³¹

Church Polity and Church Strength. Authoritarian polity does not prove to be necessary for church strength. Churches which are presently thriving and growing, present to us a mixture of polity. There does, however, prove to be a pattern of distinctiveness (doctrinal beliefs and life-style) among groups with vitality which is maintained by various forms of internal pressure, including stringency and stricture as defined by Kelley.³²

Social Action and Church Strength. Is social action a factor in church organizational weakness? The churches which are currently growing seem to stress evangelism much more than social action; while those presently declining, tend to emphasize social action rather than evangelism. Kelley contends that social action may be good or bad for an organization depending upon the relation of that action to the distinctive beliefs and values as held and understood by the members. Social Action may strengthen or weaken a church according to its doctrinal congruency, the action must have religious meaning in order to strengthen the church.³³

Church Identity and Intra-Church Behavior--Conclusions. Selznick's theory seems to be upheld by the research in

³¹Hoge, "A Test of Theories," p. 182.

³²Ibid., Kelley, pp. 109-11.

³³Hoge, "A Test of Theories," p. 180.

Intra-Church behavior. Church beliefs and values were shown to have a positive influence on membership commitment. Distinctive beliefs and life style (identity) were also shown to be maintained by those church groups which were examples of organizational strength and vitality. The actions and missions of a church could contribute to organizational strength if such were congruent with the distinctive beliefs and identity of the church.

The support of Selznick's theory is significant for this project since it clearly relates to the secondary project thesis--that it is important for the members of a church to have a clear sense of identity and purpose in order to maintain positive membership motivation and organizational strength.

Dean Kelley's more particular theory was shown to be less reliable by the research. Conservative beliefs and authoritarian polity are not necessary for church strength. Also, social action is not necessarily a factor in church weakness.

Must churches be exclusive in order to maintain strength? Does ecumenicism necessarily weaken church organization? Kelley answers yes. These questions will be explored in the next section on inter-church relations.

Church Identity and Inter-Church Relations

Church identity, by its very nature, defines the boundary and differentiation between a church and other

organizations, and churches. This boundary may be 'exclusive' and stifle inter-organizational relationships. Church identity may also be more 'inclusive' and the defined boundary may allow a greater degree of interaction between a church and other churches or religious groups.

Dean Kelley lists exclusivism and ecumenicism as factors in church strength and growth. He claims that more exclusive churches tend to grow; while the more ecumenical a church is, the more they tend to decrease in numbers.³⁴ Again this is a current trend which is not verified historically. For example, many ecumenical churches achieved a remarkable growth rate during the 1950's. Contextual factors are a better explanation for the present phenomenon.

Martin E. Marty cites Evangelical churches as an example of groups which offer much of the distinctiveness that Kelley's theory calls for, and yet have become more ecumenical in the 1970's, and have been able to reach a larger number of people within the larger culture than the more exclusive churches.³⁵

I find no theoretical reason why churches cannot cooperate with each other and still maintain organizational strength. It is exclusiveness within their distinctive identity that causes, and may demand, some churches and religious organizations to preserve their separateness. It

³⁴Kelley, p. 90.

³⁵Martin E. Marty, A Nation of Behavers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) pp. 104-105.

should, however, be possible for churches to cooperate on mutually appropriate social issues without compromising their distinctive beliefs and identity.

Church Identity, Culture, and Society

Church identity defines the boundary between a church and its environment. Again, the way a church relates to society and culture is determined by its positioning along a distinctive--conformative continuum. Conformative churches relate well with society and the larger culture. More distinctive churches tend to provide their own community, culture, and life-style.

H. Richard Niebuhr defines different Christian approaches to culture in his book Christ and Culture. Using his terminology; conformative churches approximate the 'Christ of Culture' approach, while the more distinctive churches tend towards 'Christ Against Culture'. Moderate churches are divided between the 'Christ above Culture' and the 'Christ the Transformer of Culture' motifs.³⁶

Bruce J. Nicholls identifies a Christian 'Supra-Culture'; a culture which is derived from God. His approach sounds like Niebuhr's 'Christ above Culture' type; however, it is really more like the 'Christ the Transformer of Culture' motif. The Christian 'Supra-Culture' interacts with human culture, wherever Christians are faithful, and transforms

³⁶H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1951) pp. 40-44.

it.³⁷

Robert A. Evans supports and calls for reconstructing "the middle ground between a culture-affirming liberalism and a culture-denying fundamentalism." His hopes for the future lies in faithfulness to God through Christian commitment to the 'Christ the Transformer of Culture' approach.³⁸

Again Dean Kelley's theory identifies the more distinctive churches ('Christ against Culture') as the strongest organizationally. However, one of the marks of a strong organization is the accomplishment of goals and objectives. Martin Marty points out a weakness among the 'strong' conservative churches in accomplishing cultural goals:³⁹

The bustling 'conservative' churches have not successfully reshaped American culture, or arrested cultural trends to which they objected, or prevented their own internal adaptation to wordliness.

I support Evans call for a balance between faithfulness to God and effectiveness. Faithfulness should be the goal and effectiveness only the means and measurement.⁴⁰ Faithfulness and effectiveness, both can come through encouraging a transforming supra-cultural interaction with society and the larger national culture.

³⁷Bruce J. Nicholls, Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press 1979) pp. 13-15.

³⁸Evans, p. 313.

³⁹Ibid., p. 314.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 295.

IDENTITY AND THE SAINTS CHURCH

In this section, the historical and contemporary trends and issues within the Saints church which relate to intra/inter-church relations, cultural relativity, and which potentially affect church identity, strength, and growth will be explored.

The Saints Church and Inter-Church Relations

The early Restoration movement with its 'True Church' identity defined an exclusive and almost impregnable boundary. Other religious organizations were considered the enemy--to be overcome and not cooperated with. The Utah Church continues this early approach, although not with the vengeance of former years. The Saints Church found itself in a different social context than the Utah Church. The Saints were forced to deal with the reality of being a small and scattered minority church in the mid-west; while the church in Utah built its own theocratic kingdom in the Rocky's. The Saints had to cooperate with others in order to gain social objectives. The Saints Church retained its 'True Church' designation and distinctive 'gospel' while it reached out to cooperate with others in achieving common social and community goals.

Clare D. Vlahos presents a thesis that identity in the early Reorganization was affected by two environmental considerations. The early Saints Church wanted to be considered 'legitimate' among Mormons and yet viewed as

'reasonable' by other religious groups.⁴¹ The Saints were only partially successful. The fact that it was able to combine numerous smaller groups into the second largest Restoration Church proves that a degree of 'legitimacy' was achieved among Mormons. However, relations between the Saints Church and the Utah Church became antagonistic in the 1870's and thereafter.

The Saints presented an image of 'reasonableness' to their neighbors--". . .rational, tolerant, proper, and unthreatening,"-- with a democratic-decentralized polity and a low profile leadership.⁴² By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Saints had gained social respect; nevertheless, they were still religiously identified as a heretical group by most Christians.

The Saints Church leaders, particularly F.M. Smith (the second President of the Reorganized Church), encouraged the Saints to cooperate with other denominations and join in local ministerial alliances, however, most of the time, the Saints were rejected as 'non-Christian' and were not allowed to participate. In 1908, the Saints Church was rejected in its bid to join the Federal Council of Churches, the following reasons were given: 1. The church was not Christian; 2. The Saints soteriology was incompatible; 3. The Restoration canon

⁴¹Clare D. Vlahos, "Images of Orthodoxy: Self-Identity in Early Reorganization," in Maurice L. Draper and Clare D. Vlahos (eds.) Restoration Studies I (Independence, MO: Herald, 1980) p. 177.

⁴²Ibid., p. 181.

of scriptures, which include material in addition to the Bible, was objectionable. The Saints Church was allowed to send delegates to the Iowa Interchurch World Movement at Des Moines in 1919. Soon the Church was involved in the Independence (Mo.) Religious Council for Community and was invited to join the local Ministerial Alliance (Independence, Mo.) in the 1940's. However, in 1948, the Saints Church was refused membership in the International Council of Religious Education, for the same reasons given in 1908.⁴³

It wasn't until the 1960's and 1970's that the Saints wanted to become more ecumenically involved and the objections to such participation began to dissipate. As the number of members and leaders within the Saints Church with protestant seminary education increased, ecumenical exposure and understanding was fostered on both sides.

In 1970, the Saints Church was reviewed and considered as eligible for membership in the National Council of Churches, (U.S.A.) Although the Saints are not members in the Council, the church does send representatives to N.C.C. conferences and participates in many of the N.C.C. Commissions. Saints Church leaders also figure prominently in the Missouri Ministerial Association in recent years.

The early Restoration 'true church' identity has gone through considerable refinement and reinterpretation within the Saints Church since 1960. Exclusiveness is no longer

⁴³Larry E. Hunt, F.M. Smith: Saint as Reformer, 1874-1946 (Independence, MO: Herald, 1982) 2:406-407.

encouraged, and blatant proselyting is discouraged. The First Presidency recently proclaimed (January, 1983):⁴⁴

Our main concern is not to win persons away from a satisfying and meaningful participation in other communities or to deny value in other movements in order to extol our own. This is, in fact, one feature of the church's witness that we have felt moved to discourage in recent years.

The current understanding of the Saints Church leaders in regard to identity no longer reinforces the historical and exclusive 'true church' approach. Rather it is an affirmative testimony that the Saints Church is "called of God to accomplish the divine purpose in God's world,"--but not an exclusive call:⁴⁵

An unfortunate and erroneous concept about the nature of authority is that only one organized church institution at a time may have authority to represent God. . .We believe also that God's Holy Spirit works with persons and groups in ways we may not presently discern. Our faith is in the God who came into the world and identified with all people in Jesus Christ. Our faith in the majesty and power of that revelation would be diminished immeasurably if we perceived the ongoing authoritative ministry of Jesus Christ as being confined to our day and sect. It is our faith and hope that the Lord has many forces at work in the world that we know not of, in addition to those of which we are clearly aware. If so, the authority of the church is enhanced rather than diminished.

In the same document, exclusive authority to represent God is also denied:⁴⁶

Since persons in other institutions do not meet the qualifications to function authoritatively within our

⁴⁴The First Presidency, "Unity in Diversity," Saints Herald CXXX:1 (January 1983)

⁴⁵The First Presidency, "The Identity of The Church," one of six papers presented at the First Presidency Meetings, Independence, MO (January 1979) p. 12.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 13.

institutions, it is the tendency of some persons to conclude that other institutions have no authority to represent God. This is a dangerous conclusion which borders on the spirit of arrogance. If the other person or institution is blessed as we are with the authority of the Holy Spirit, we rejoice with them in the work of God among us, and pray with them that the Lord of the harvest may send even more laborers into the ripening vineyard.

At the 1980 World Conference a number of resolutions were offered to the delegates which considered inter-church relations. Two resolutions were opposed to ecumenical activities, while a third encouraged such relations. The two 'exclusive' resolutions were lost through an 'objection to consider'. The third and more 'affirmative' resolution was endorsed:⁴⁷

Resolved, That the World Conference hereby endorses the participation of the World Church in interdenominational Christian ministries where such participation does not require the World Church to (1) alter or abandon any of the traditional beliefs and practices of the church, (2) endorse any creeds or theological positions which are inconsistent with any of the traditional beliefs and practices of the church, or (3) commit a disproportionate share of the church's resources of time, money or personnel.

Resolved, That the World Conference hereby affirms the right of each field jurisdiction to determine the nature of its own participation in interdenominational Christian ministries and to determine the level of commitment of its resources of time, money, and personnel where such participation does not require any field jurisdiction to (1) alter or abandon any of the traditional beliefs and practices of the church, or (2) endorse any creeds or theological positions which are inconsistent with any of the traditional beliefs and practices of the church.

The current approach of the Saints Church is a far cry from the early Restoration designation as: "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth,. . ."⁴⁸

⁴⁷World Conference Bulletin (1980) 274-75.

⁴⁸Doctrine and Covenants (Independence, MO: Herald, 1970) 1:5e.

The Saints Church and Culture

The Early Restoration (1830-44) identity and idea of Zion called for the formation of a new culture and society in opposition to the present one--a 'Christ against Culture' approach. On a distinctive--conformative continuum, the early movement was extremely distinctive, to the point that the Saints were constantly alienating their 'gentile' neighbors. The result was catastrophic for the Saints--persecution, incarceration, tar and feathers, beatings, mass murder, and expulsion from their own homes.

The Saints are the only religious group in America to have ever been subject to a legal extermination or expulsion order from a state of the Union. Governor L.W. Boggs of Missouri issued an official order to the state militia on Oct. 27, 1938:⁴⁹

The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the State, if necessary, for the public good.

Following this order; the state militia systematically killed and expelled thousands of Saints from the state. The Saints had to flee, leaving their homes and possessions behind--many in the dead of winter. For a number of years, thereafter, it was actually illegal for 'Mormons' to live in Missouri.

The Saints of Missouri resettled in Illinois and built a new city along the Mississippi River--Nauvoo. Soon it was the largest city in the state. Again the Saints were

⁴⁹ Heman C. Smith, History of the R.L.D.S. (Independence, MO: Herald, 1951) 2:217.

forced to leave--again there was mass suffering as 20,000 Saints were 'encouraged' by 'unofficially--mustered' militia to leave their homes behind in 1846 and leave the state. The reasons for such rejection are too complex to recite in this work. The persecution, and estrangement of those early times still affects the thinking and the emotions of the Saints.

The Saints Church has tempered its cultural approach through the years. Unlike the Utah Mormons; the Reorganized Saints were scattered and typically lived in pluralistic communities and urban areas with neighbors of diverse religious affiliations. These second generation Saints were encouraged to live cooperatively among their fellow Christians (no longer considered 'gentiles'). They still maintained a distinctive life-style and believed in the superiority of their movement; but they made an effort not to alienate their neighbors.

Today, many characteristics of the Saints life-style are no longer as peculiar as they once were. Many people are concerned about their diet. Abstinence from tobacco and alcoholic beverages is no longer strange. The supermarkets are full of decaffeinated products. The general life-style of the Saints is indistinguishable from other serious Christians.

In the 1980's, the church leaders are encouraging the Saints to become immersed into the world. Isolation is discouraged and discounted as unfortunate. The transforming motif (Christ the transformer of culture) is the

call of the day:⁵⁰

The church does not arrogantly march in to change the world. Instead it works with the world in making our communities better places to live. The world can and will become the kind of place where people live in harmony with each other and in the assurance that they are loved by God.

Again let us turn to the theological papers presented by the First Presidency in 1979 as an example of the present thinking among church leaders:⁵¹

The mission of the church is like that of Jesus to stand in the world rather than against the world. . . . If the church perceives itself as a full and present participant in the world it may sound the witness of Gods' judgement in history as well as his salvation in history. But if the church stakes out its position in isolation from the world, its prophetic voice is invalidated because it is an external non-participant whose word is angry judgement rather than redeeming invitation. . . . The church is marked by its obedience to God rather than being noted for its power to compel.

The present approach tends towards Nicholl's 'Supra-Culture' model and Niebuhr's 'Christ the Transformer of Culture'. This is obviously quite different from the distinctive-exclusive-isolationist orientation of the early Restoration. In the Reorganization the idea of Zion has gone through a gradual change and reinterpretation. No longer do the Saints regard Zion as only an exclusive city--but as a dynamic movement toward transforming the world in the name of Jesus Christ. We will explore this further in the next chapter.

⁵⁰Peter A. Judd and A. Bruce Lindgren, An Introduction to the Saints Church (Independence, MO: Herald, 1976) p. 207.

⁵¹The First Presidency, "The Nature of the Church," one of six papers presented at the First Presidency Meetings, Independence, MO (January 1, 1979) p. 5.

The Saints Church and Intra-Church Behavior

From its very inception, the Reorganized Church has maintained a democratic and relatively decentralized polity. The various dissenting groups, which were welded together to form the Saints Church, became accustomed to autonomous congregational polity in the intervening years after 1844.

Diversity and freedom of thought has always characterized the Saints Church. Leadership decisions have never been unconditionally and uncritically accepted. There is no formal creed to be officially attested to and individual thought and mutual respect are held in high regard.

Joseph Smith, III (President, 1860-1914) spent most of his life fostering such a climate. The following are examples of his many pronouncements on the subject. The first is a response to an inquiry published in the Saints Herald (official church magazine) in 1890:⁵²

We publish an article by Elder A. Haws concerning the conflict of opinion and theory presented by the various writers in the Herald and in the papers of the day. Brother Haws undoubtedly sees this matter as many others do; but, is it not a fact that light, moral and spiritual, flows from an enlightened interchange of thought?

If nothing were said or written until all of the brethren and all men were of one opinion on a given topic, where and how would there ever be an interchange? If all differences of opinion are to be construed into contention, how shall unity be reached? Brother Haws agrees that on the main topics, the potent factors of the gospel economy, there is a quite good degree of unity among those contending writers; but upon some of those topics on which there seems to have been less written, or what is written of a looser and more ambiguous sort, there has been a sharp interchange of forensic disputings.

⁵² Joseph Smith III, Saints Herald XXXVII (1880) 97.

What of it? The elders have long been fighting the "one man idea" and contending for the sacredness of the personal right to think and act, and why should we now object to what must always be the result of individual thinking, diversity of idea and conclusion? What possible harm can accrue to the true saint, or the honorable man, who may become conscious that upon certain things other men think differently from him and from each other? . . . If they saw all things exactly alike, the argument would be almost irresistible that the field of vision was very limited, or the range restricted by personal inability to see much or see far.

The second example is a statement made by President Smith at the World Conference of 1910:⁵³

There is no absolute tribunal this side of the great judgement day that is authorized to determine exactly who is right and who is wrong in a dispute or controversy, such as arises frequently in our midst. Hence it devolves upon us to carry our differences without animosity, without faultfinding, without charging evil intent or purpose upon those who may differ from us. I have tried to impress this thought upon you and upon others, and I want now to have you think upon it. . .

There is no tribunal--I want you to remember this affirmation and I hope these representatives of the press will quote me as I state it now--there is no tribunal, this side of the great judgement bar, that has the authorized right to sit in judgement upon the faith of men and say whether or not they are heterodox or orthodox. The right is reserved for that great judge and that tribunal which shall try all mankind. . .

This makes every man responsible to God. He has a secondary responsibility to those with whom he is associated in labor or work, to observe their rights, while assuming those which he deemed to belong to himself.

The final example is also in response to conference action:⁵⁴

The attempt to force the church into the declaration of a formulated creed failed as heretofore. There was no disposition to build the "iron bedstead" upon which to stretch the devotee. It was equally apparent that the body had little sympathy with any effort to destroy the integrity of the revelations of God to the church. It was considered that to declare upon this point at the

⁵³The First Presidency "Unity in Diversity."

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 6-7.

demand of one, involved the precedent to declare on another point at the demand of someone else; and if for these, then at the requirement of an who chose to rise up and demand a declaration of dogma, the church would have to yield, the result of which would be to finally eliminate the liberty of individual inquiry, quench the teaching of the word of God, and practically deny the office work of the Spirit in leading unto truth. Once involved in the intricacies of such formulated declarations there could be no abiding lines of demarcation drawn where belief might safely rest and dogmatism assume the rule.

In the January 1, 1983 issue of the Saints Herald, the First Presidency of the Saints Church wrote an article entitled "Unity In Diversity". In this article, the current leaders supported the diversity of thought within the church while they called for unity through respect and love:⁵⁵

The foregoing opens up the question of unity, which is not so much achieved (as it may apparently be achieved in some other religious faiths) by rigid, authoritarian edict, to which all are required to yield. Rather it is pursued through honest yet respectful and tolerant searching, in the spirit of love.

The following statement of the First Presidency gives us an expanded view of their current understanding of leadership, diversity and unity:⁵⁶

We, the First Presidency, are indeed charged with the responsibility of setting the course and interpreting the faith and practice of the church. In some matters where uniformity is essential to order, official statements or policy decisions will be more specific, especially where there is scriptural guidance on the matter. On the other hand, in many matters where interpretation of theological or scriptural data is possible, we would prefer to give such guidance as we can without falling into dogmatic prescription.

For the church to fulfill its mission under these circumstances calls for a high degree of mutual trust and

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 7.

respect. Bickering and contention are, and always have been, harmful. Differences of opinion, expressed in the spirit of tolerance and mutual regard are, in our experience, invariably the foundation for growth, enlightenment, and movement toward unity.

The Saints typically do not look upon pluralism and diversity as a weakness (as some organizational theories may indicate). Rather, they consider it a positive example of strength and uniqueness--a valued environment to be maintained at all times.

IDENTITY, THE SAINTS CHURCH, AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH

The call of the Saints' 'Faith to Grow' program is to achieve ". . .a qualitative growth or quantitative expansion through a deep and abiding faith in God and his purposes. . ."⁵⁷ The emphasis is on Faithfulness to God with qualitative growth as an expected and hopeful by-product. The First Presidency recently published the following statement in regard to church growth:⁵⁸

Essentially, the concern of the Church, everywhere and at all times, is not primarily numbers. Rather, it has to do with the redemption of humankind and the quality of life experienced in and among persons. If, however, added membership means (a) more persons having access to the blessings of the gospel, and (b) more persons sharing in those redemptive ministries, then increasing the membership cannot be dismissed as of no importance.

The possible interrelatedness between church identity and organizational strength has been explored in the preceding

⁵⁷From Wallace B. Smith, "In Christ Shall All Be Made Alive," an address at the Saints 1980 World Conference, Independence, MO: April 6, 1980. World Conference Bulletin (1980) 262.

⁵⁸The First Presidency, "Unity in Diversity," p. 5.

section. In view of the current 'Faith to Grow' objectives of growth and expansion, it would seem to be important to maintain or increase the organizational strength of the church. Any approach to defining and unifying identity for the Saints Church should seriously consider the potential effects on organizational strength and growth.

When the present state of the Saints Church is analyzed according to organizational theory, the results are inconclusive. The Saints produce some of the distinctiveness and homogeneity which Kelley and Selznick associate with organizational strength. The Saints maintain an identity which include unique doctrinal beliefs, scriptures, and life-style characteristics. However, the Saints do not presently have a clear inclusive common sense of identity. Discordant theological views have clouded the picture considerably. This inconsistent situation is complicated further by contextual factors over which any church has little or no control.

A definition of church identity based upon the Restoration idea of Zion will be defined in chapter five. The implications as indicated by this proposal will also be examined and explored.

Chapter 4

EXPLORING ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology and eschatological themes are rampant in our midst. On television and radio, we hear voices proclaiming that the 'Rapture' is nearly here for those who 'truly believe'. In the supermarkets we see books which warn us of a coming Antichrist. In the streets, strangers offer us magazines which promise to explain the 'signs of the times'. All around the world, marxists and terrorist shout to us in eschatological slogans. Even contemporary liberal theologians are beginning to speak to us in eschatological language.

Contemporary eschatology is beginning to become the 'capstone' of dogmatic theology. Eschatological questions touch every Christian doctrine, therefore the importance of eschatology can no longer be disparaged, particularly in light of today's troubled world.

What is eschatology? Eschatology is defined in the dictionary as:¹

1. A study dealing with the ultimate destiny or purpose of humanity and the world.
2. Ultimate destiny or purpose.

¹Websters 3rd New International Dictionary.

3. Things of final importance. "Its presupposes a set of assumptions concerning the end events of history."

In the history of Christian theology and doctrines, eschatology has never been at the center of Christian thought. Different elements of Christian future hope have been emphasized at one time or another, but there has seldom been a comprehensive treatment of all factors and elements of the doctrine.

In the first part of the 19th century there were a legion of sectarian approaches to eschatology. Many reached back to older traditions, in order to preserve church doctrine, as a general reaction to the Rationalists and the Enlightenment.

Later, Liberal theologians, who were influenced by contemporary philosophy and the new idea of evolution, began to negate traditional eschatological views for an idea of timeless progress in natural existence. Therefore, this worldliness became the primary emphasis with a 'Kingdom of God' rooted solely in the present life. The Future life was generally presented, not in specific terms or definitions, but as a reasonable hope for some type of continued existence beyond physical death.²

These general tendencies of the 19th and early 20th centuries have continued down to the present. The old traditional sectarian approaches are prevalent today in conservative and fundamentalist circles.

²Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) p. 664.

The early liberal positions have been reinterpreted in process theology, liberation theology, and theology of hope. Now eschatology has central position and emphasis in many serious contemporary theological treatments.

A TYPOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY ESCHATOLOGICAL THOUGHT

In examining diverse theological treatments, it becomes obvious that there are a number of ways that contemporary theologians approach eschatology and eschatological themes. The major approaches may be summarized in the following typology devised for this project in order to compare, study, and classify contemporary eschatological thinking and tendencies:

1. Supernatural Destiny
2. Natural Present-Future
3. Supernatural with Natural-Present Implications
4. Natural with Supernatural Hope or Expectations

Category #1-The Supernatural Destiny Approach

This first type of eschatology is firmly rooted in traditional soteriology. It presents a destiny which is completely in a different kind of existence, a wholly future, other-worldly existence brought about through divine supernatural intervention

A literal second coming of Christ is expected. The cultures, knowledge, and systems of this world are negated and are to be ultimately destroyed. There will be a 'New

Heaven and a New Earth'. Christians of all generations are to be resurrected and will take part in this second coming and this new type of existence. The Final Judgement will culminate the history of humanity and determine individual ultimate destiny. Niebuhr's 'Christ against Culture' would find a home in this category.

Most fundamentalist and evangelical writers approach eschatology in this manner. The Systematic Theology of Louis Berkhof is an example of this type.³

Category #2-The Natural Present-Future Approach

Eschatology of this genre emphasizes the ultimate destiny of this world and the present and future conditions of human existence. Soteriological considerations are defined in terms of positive change toward freedom, liberation and better human life in this world. The divine or supernatural force is involved in initiating or helping to bring about this change for better living conditions. Traditional eschatological terminology is utilized. The second coming of Christ is realized in the possibility of Christ in-dwelling and becoming a part of the Christian. The Kingdom of God is already at hand in the lives of Christians. It is becoming a reality as Christians bring about positive change in this world.

Soteriological considerations which involve 'other-worldly' existence or life after death, are either de-emphasized

³Ibid.

ignored, or in some cases negated by the theologians of this approach. Divine intervention is direct in natural processes, in the lives of Christians, and those who respond to the Holy Spirit. Niebuhr's 'Christ of Culture' motif could fit here much of the time.

Most Liberal and liberation theology finds a home in this category. Contemporary examples include the writings of Robem Alves, John B. Cobb, Jr., Gustavo Gutierrez, W. Norman Pittenger, and Rosemary Ruether.

Category #3-The Supernatural With Natural-Present
Implications Approach

This type emphasizes the traditional soteriological considerations and eschatological expectations of the Supernatural Destiny approach, but calls for a necessary present response in changing this world for the better. The cultures, knowledge, and systems of this world are not to be ignored nor totally negated. Christians are called to bring positive change and transformation into the present natural realm. Niebuhr's 'Christ the Transformer of Culture' is the norm here, but there is a tendency toward the 'Christ above Culture' motif.

Some reform and evangelical writers and theologians are representative of this category. The most prominent example is Karl Barth.

Category #4-The Natural With Supernatural Hope or Expectations Approach

There is another category of theologians which emphasize the Natural Present-Future approach, but allow for the possibility of some type of supernatural divine intervention. While traditional soteriological considerations and eschatological expectations are de-emphasized, they are presented as possible. Though some theologians of this type may consider a literal second coming, or a physical resurrection as improbable; many would look forward to some type of continued existence after physical death with hope. Niebuhr's 'Christ the Transformer of Culture' is the goal in this category; however there is tendency towards the 'Christ of Culture' motif.

Some liberal theologians are examples of this kind of thinking, such as; Carl E. Braaten, Jurgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg.

THE ESCHATOLOGY OF PANNENBERG, GUTIERREZ, AND COBB

Insight from the eschatological method of Wolfhart Pannenberg will be utilized and referred to in writing a 'Theology of Zion'. Other important sources will include the writings of Gustavo Gutierrez and John B. Cobb, Jr. This section contains a summary of the eschatological thinking of Pannenberg as compared and contrasted with Gutierrez and Cobb. It also indicates the relative usefulness of these sources to the project.

Wolfhart Pannenberg & Eschatology

Pannenberg is committed to a "Theology of Reason" which he chooses to define as an "eschatologically oriented ontology".⁴ For Pannenberg, Jesus Christ is the center of all things, reality is found in Jesus. God has revealed the structure of all reality in his self-revelation through Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we have the anticipated end by which all reality hangs together.

Pannenberg adapted Hegel's view of universal history as the self-disclosure of God. For Pannenberg, the basis and foundation of Christianity and theology is the general process of history, in which is the full disclosure of God. In history, God makes himself known. Theology must remain in the world of human history. "History is the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology."⁵

According to Pannenberg, reason reigns over the past and the present, while faith is connected with the future. Faith must be grounded upon reasonable events. Faith is not to be arrived at blindly but "by means of an event that can be considered reliable".⁶ Faith has to be connected to historical truth that is open to all historical investigation.

⁴Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus-God & Man (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) p. 12.

⁵Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," in C. Westermann (ed.) Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963) p. 314.

⁶Wolfhart Pannenberg, Revelation as History (New York: Macmillan, 1968) p. 138.

Through faith humans are called toward the future. A future which is opened by the events connected to the activity and fate of Jesus. God has revealed himself in the fate and activity of Jesus. In the life of Jesus, the end of history is actually experienced in advance and anticipated. For Pannenberg, the Resurrection is an actual historical event which points to the end of history and the full revelation of God. God reveals himself by means of his historical acts. Each event is only one step closer towards the future full revelation of God. In Jesus we have both past revelation and the anticipation of the end where God fully reveals his deity through the totality of all events. As the sole anticipatory event of the eschaton, Jesus stands as the focal point of God's self-revelation. The ultimate reality is found therefore in universal history.

In Jesus, the revelation of God in terms of total history can be considered in the present. The Resurrection anticipates the end and calls human beings to commit themselves to God. It is upon the revelation of God through Jesus, that humans are to base their life in faith towards the God of the future. In Basic Questions in Theology. Pannenberg states: "man participates in God not by flight from the world but by active transformation of the world which is the expression of the divine love. . .".⁷

For Pannenberg, the future is a reality which includes and continually revises the present. Through Faith

⁷Wolfhart Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology (London: SCM Press, 1971) 2:248.

humans are called towards the future by participating in the natural world and responding to God in the present. This approach falls into category #4: Natural with Supernatural Hope or Expectations.

The Eschatology of Pannenberg and the Project 'Theology of Zion'

Pannenberg's view of history provides a major methodological basis for the 'Theology of Zion' within this project. Pannenberg sees God as being victorious in this world and in the total realm of human history--past, present and future. He finds in an event of the past--the resurrection of Jesus Christ--an affirmation of God's ultimate victory. In the Future, he projects a common resurrection of the dead which will bring a "full revelation of the Kingdom of God, which will complete man's social destiny."⁸ He expects the affirmation of the past and the expectation of the future to effect and encourage responsible living in the present. According to Pannenberg, life is lived by an anticipation which is directed toward a final outcome--the resurrection of the dead, the end of the world and the creation of a new world.⁹ It is this historical view which makes his eschatology compatible with an interpretation of Zion.

The writings of Pannenberg will be utilized and referred to as a major source throughout the 'theology of Zion'

⁸Wolfhart Pannenberg, The Apostles' Creed (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979) p. 176.

⁹Wolfhart Pannenberg, What is Man? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970) p. 109.

in the next chapter. In that part of the project, his views will be presented as a comparison or as a contrast to the Zionitic vision.

Gustavo Gutierrez and Eschatology

Eschatology has a central place in A Theology of Liberation. Gutierrez holds eschatology as the key to understanding the Christian Faith and God's work in history. For Gutierrez, eschatology is not to be confined to extra-historical events--it is actually the driving force of history toward the fulfillment of God's promise to human-kind.¹⁰

Gutierrez is concerned that the future hope does not become an evasion of present reality, the real value of eschatology lies in its possible effect upon the present.¹¹ For Gutierrez, eschatological vision can transform present historical reality through relevant human action, and response.¹²

Utopia is a term which Gutierrez uses to symbolize the eschatological future and the eschatological goal of a 'new society'. Eschatological utopia must lead to action in social, and political liberation--a new society in communion with God.¹³ For Gutierrez, eschatological hope is thus the driving force of liberation. None of that hope

¹⁰Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973) p. 164.

¹¹Ibid., p. 218. ¹²Ibid., p. 168.

¹³Ibid., p. 235.

rests in supernatural intervention, therefore, this approach is classified as category #2: Natural Present-Future.

The Eschatology of Gutierrez and Pannenberg-Compared and Contrasted

The theology of Gutierrez seems to lean heavily on the understanding of Bloch, Moltmann, and Pannenberg. His emphasis at all times is upon action in present reality. The approach of Bloch and Moltmann in naming 'not-yet-being' as reality seems to find a home in the writing of Gutierrez, although it is not directly referred to. This separates him from Pannenberg's concept of universal history as the real. However, Gutierrez seems to want to see the vision of 'not-yet-being' as a future fulfillment in utopia.

Action for Gutierrez is always to be performed in present natural reality, accomplished through human commitment, human action, and human work.

The Eschatology of Gutierrez and the Project 'Theology of Zion'

Gutierrez's view of utopia is particularly helpful for this project. Gutierrez sees utopia as leading to an ultimate "communion with God and with all men"¹⁴ through economic, social, and political liberation. This is right in line with the Saints understanding of Zion which also envisions a new eschatological society that points to and demands economic, social, and political change.

¹⁴Ibid.

Two major points made by Gutierrez will be emphasized and affirmed in the 'Theology of Zion' defined in this project. The primary point is that the utopian vision has meaning in transforming historical reality through commitment and action in the present. The utopian vision requires action in the present or it is considered to be an evasion of reality.¹⁵ The Zionitic vision of this project will also demand present commitment and response.

The secondary point is that the utopian vision will ultimately be fulfilled in historical reality:¹⁶

The eschatological promises are being fulfilled throughout history;. . .the complete encounter with the Lord will mark and end to history, but it will take place in history.

The Zionitic vision of this project will also propose to culminate in a complete encounter with the Lord within the realm of historical reality. However the Zionitic vision will also point to and anticipate a new kind of existence which follows this historical finale--a new world to come.

John B. Cobb Jr. and Eschatology

John B. Cobb, Jr. is unable to share the eschatological expectations of Pannenberg or Gutierrez, he does not agree that God guarantees the ultimate victory of good in this world. He hopes only that the good may gradually lead to a better world.

In Process Theology (written with David R. Griffin), the future is presented as being "truly open and that what

¹⁵Ibid., p. 234. ¹⁶Ibid., p. 168.

will happen depends upon what human beings will do." It is by God's persuasive power that humans may choose to change their world for the better. There is no guarantee that humans will give heed; process theism "cannot provide the assurance that God's will is always done."¹⁷

Cobb refers to 'images of hope' in his Christ In a Pluralistic Age.¹⁸ The future needs to be 'creatively transformed'. Christ is this force or process of creative transformation. "We cannot rest content with our present Christian structure of existence."¹⁹ Cobb presents the Kingdom as the resurrection at the end in history. In Christ, history is constantly ending and being resurrected in creative transformation, thus Christ is himself the hope of the world.²⁰

For Cobb, the hope is that the future is undetermined. "This means that we cannot project particular future possibilities and cling to them, . . ."²¹ Christ can provide a unifying eschatological image to guide us toward being transformed toward what humans can be and may become. This is definitely a category #2: Natural Present-Future Approach.

The Eschatology of Cobb and Pannenberg-Compared and Contrasted

Cobb does not share Pannenberg's understanding of universal history. He does not agree that God guarantees

¹⁷John B. Cobb, Jr., and David R. Griffin, Process Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976) p. 118.

¹⁸John B. Cobb, Jr., Christ In A Pluralistic Age (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975) Chapter II, pp. 178-89.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 183. ²⁰Ibid., p. 185. ²¹Ibid., p. 183.

the ultimate victory of good in this natural world. For Cobb, Christ can provide an eschatological image to guide humans toward a better future.

For Pannenberg, God guarantees his self revelation in universal history, Christ being the focal point, the anticipation of a victorious end.

The writings of both Cobb and Pannenberg demand responsibility and action in the present natural world. Both believe that God's persuasive power may affect humans to choose to change their world for the better.

The Eschatology of Cobb and The Project 'Theology of Zion'

The writings of Cobb have been particularly helpful in the research phase of this project. However his historical view is not compatible with the victorious events anticipated by a 'Theology of Zion'.

A 'Theology of Zion' can agree with Cobb, that the future needs to be 'creatively transformed' and that Christ is the force or the transforming process. Both Zion and Cobb demand responsibility in the present reality. But Zion represents God's guarantee of ultimate victory for his Kingdom in the realm and reality of this natural world. Cobb cannot project any ultimate victory of good, he only hopes for a gradual change towards a better world. Therefore Cobb represents a contrasting example of the expectations and the emphasis of a 'Theology of Zion'.

ESCHATOLOGY AND THE SAINTS CHURCH

The early Latter Day Saints (1830-44) were driven and preoccupied by eschatological notions and expectations. They fervently expected the imminent return of Jesus Christ, and believed that they were called to prepare for such an event. The Saints came to believe that they were exclusively called to help establish the Kingdom of God on earth which would include the literal building of the City of Zion, the New Jerusalem, in this country. This cause of Zion became a major focus and point of identity for the early Saints.

The early Restoration understanding of eschatology is representative of Category #1-The Supernatural Destiny Approach. A literal second coming of Christ was expected. The nations, cultures, and systems of this world were destined for ultimate destruction--only the survival of the Saints City of Zion was assured.

There was a shift in eschatological approach during the leadership of Joseph Smith III of the Reorganization. A greater emphasis was placed upon the present realities of living. The Saints were encouraged to cooperate in improving the communities in which they lived as part of their eschatological Zionite commission rather than gathering to one central location.²² This new approach shifted the Saints Church towards eschatological Category #3-Supernatural with Natural-Present Implications.

²²Peter a Judd and A. Bruce Lindgren, An Introduction to the Saints Church (Independence, MO: Herald, 1976) p. 26.

The eschatological understanding of the Saints remained essentially the same for several generations. It wasn't until the 1960's that a change in eschatological thinking among Saints Church leaders became apparent. In a report to the 1964 World Conference, the First Presidency makes the following observation:²³

It may well be that this basic faith (in the Lord Jesus Christ and his coming kingdom) will sometimes be expressed in terms peculiar to our age rather than in phrases which were once new but, which have long since lost their relevance.

References to 'the latter days', the 'signs of the times', the 'final events' and the Second Coming of Christ have all but disappeared from the official periodicals and literature of the Saints Church. Instead of preparing for the 'Parousia', the Saints are now encouraged to be the body of Christ at work in the world--the Salt, the Light, and the Leaven:²⁴

As Christians we cannot look on as spectators, hoping that God will accomplish his purposes without it being necessary for us to be involved. If we are to be the body of Christ we must be immersed in the needs of the world as he was.

The eschatological thinking of the present Saints Church leaders span categories #3 and #4 with definite present tendencies towards #4--Natural with Supernatural Hope or Expectations. However, the various eschatological approaches of the diverse membership of the Saints Church, more than likely, spans the entire spectrum of all four categories.

²³World Conference Bulletin (1964) 284.

²⁴Judd and Lindgren, p. 205.

ESCHATOLOGY AND IDENTITY

Identity is, a coherent sense of purpose, values, and meaning; a major unifying principle and the main reason for being. In some ways this same definition could also apply to eschatology.

Eschatology can potentially provide a major point of identity within a religion. In Christian theology, eschatological questions touch every doctrine. The way Christians perceive themselves and the world is affected by eschatological images and beliefs. Eschatological perceptions may therefore affect individual identity.

Eschatology also affects the identity of many religious groups and churches. Eschatological interpretation and beliefs are a major source of differentiation between religious bodies. The eschatological approach of many groups and churches helps to define a unique character and group identity.

In the Saints Church, eschatology contributes a major point of identity in the Saints understanding of Zion. This possibility will be explored and defined in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

ZIONOLOGY: A THEOLOGY OF ZION AND AN IDENTITY
FOR THE SAINTS CHURCH

The Restoration Movement has always been concerned about the physical as well as the spiritual aspects of human existence. In 1832 Joseph Smith proclaimed in a document considered as scripture by the Saints: "and the spirit and the body is the soul of man."¹ The Saints concern themselves with the souls and salvation of humanity in a wholistic sense--both spiritual and physical.

The Saints understanding and doctrine of Zion contains and demonstrates a wholistic approach. Zion involves the totality of human existence--physical and spiritual; natural and supernatural; past, present, and future. Zion can be a people and an identity; a community and the New Jerusalem. Zion is a tangible demonstration of the Kingdom of God in this world and time.

This chapter proposes to define a comprehensive and inclusive theology of Zion which will include as many of its diverse aspects as discernible. Contemporary treatments of Zion have typically defined and emphasized one or two aspects of Zion while choosing to purposely ignore, exclude, or disparage other attributes and possibilities. In Zion, a unique

¹Doctrine and Covenants (Independence, MO: Herald, 1970) 85:4a.

inclusive identity will be discovered and defined for the Saints, also its effects upon the church will be evaluated.

Zion is presently a theological battleground within the Saints Church. Conservative elements want to maintain the eschatological notions and expectations of former years which focused upon Zion as a literal exclusive city--the New Jerusalem. The contemporary leaders of the Saints Church have consistently discounted this exclusive approach and have encouraged the Saints to see Zion as a symbol for community service and development.

It is the thesis of this project that a comprehensive theology of Zion can define a relevant, inclusive theological context which may accomodate diverse viewpoints and provide a basis for unique common identity, purpose, and motivation within the Saints Church. I choose to call this proposal--Zionology.

ZION--A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Early in the Restoration Movement, Zion became more than just a symbol, but an actual physical location as well. The Book of Mormon published in 1830 at the founding of the church, contained references to an eschatological city--a New Jerusalem, to be built in this hemisphere in the last days. A city where the faithful of God will gather from all nations and prepare for the second coming of Christ.

In 1831, Joseph Smith designated Independence, Missouri as "the land of promise, and the place for the city

of Zion. . .the Center Place."² Even though the Saints were later expelled from Independence and the State of Missouri; they still continued to look upon that location as the 'promise land'.

The Saints gathered in other locations and built cities at Kirtland, Ohio; Farwest, Mo.; and Nauvoo, Ill. These cities were understood to be 'Stakes of Zion'--designated gathering places for the Saints. Eventually the Saints were driven from these locations as well. The collective efforts of these early Saints resulted in rejection, persecution, and finally division.

These early Saints came to believe that they were in the final moments of history--the latter days (as in Latter Day Saints). They expected tribulations in the world--but Zion was to be a place of safety for the righteous. For these Saints all other aspects and understandings of Zion became quite secondary.

Zion--A 19th Century Utopia

Many have characterized the early 'Mormon' movement as being an example of 19th century communitarianism. The early community efforts of the Saints welded together a total social, economic, political, and religious society on the western frontier. Klaus J. Hansen provides the following

²Ibid., 57:1.

observations:³

Smith, in his revelations, had provided a blueprint for a social, economic, and moral reorganization of society that could be accomplished only by complementing religious with social and political ends.

Hansen also recognizes a revolutionary character and tendency in early Mormonism which lead to excessive coordination in social, political, and religious tasks and goals.⁴

It is precisely these revolutionary tendencies which incensed the 'gentile' neighbors of the Saints. In Kirtland, Ohio, and Independence, Mo., early communitarian attempts proved to be problematic. All property was held by the church for several years until internal and external pressures effected a policy revision. Cooperative economic ventures, particularly in banking, led to a downfall for the Saints efforts in Kirtland. Missourian rejection of early Mormonism, rather than just religious discrimination, had more to do with the abolitionist views of the Saints and the potential political and economic power exhibited in their growing numerical strength.

The early efforts of the Saints were culminated in building the city of Nauvoo, Illinois. It was soon one of the largest cities in the west and certainly one of the most beautiful and prosperous. The Nauvoo city charter uniquely

³Klaus J. Hansen, "Mormonism and American Culture", in F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards (eds.) The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1973) p. 19.

⁴Ibid., p. 21.

established the city as an independent autonomous political unit--a state within a state. The judicial writ of other jurisdictions was consistently ignored and was considered invalid in Nauvoo. Eventually the charter was revoked by the State and the Saints were 'encouraged' to leave the 'city beautiful', and leave they did. Again the Saints had alienated their neighbors and were rejected due to a complex integration of religious, economic, and political factors--a 19th century utopian mix.

Zion and The Reorganization

The early leaders of the 'New Organization' encouraged the Saints to remain in a scattered condition and to direct their Zionite efforts in smaller groups and enterprises on their own initiative. Gathering to one location, as in former years, was discouraged until there were evidences of divine direction.

In 1870 a group of Saints formed the basis for a large cooperative effort called 'The United Order of Enoch'. Lands were purchased in Decatur County, Iowa and the City of Lamoni was founded. In 1881 the headquarters of the Church moved to Lamoni, along with the President of the church, Joseph Smith, III and his family. Several thousand Saints were involved in the Zionite efforts of Lamoni, however the Saints in general were counseled to remain in their present locations and build up those diverse communities as their Zionite witness to the world.

At the 1909 General Conference, Joseph Smith, III presented a document to the church that he represented as divine guidance in regard to the gathering of the Saints for Zion's implementation. This document is now Section 128 in the Saints Book of Doctrine and Covenants. Church Historian, Richard P. Howard identifies the following implications for Zion's understanding within the document:⁵

1. Zion cannot be limited to any single geographic location.
2. Diverse interest-vocational organizations will play vital roles in the Zion's process.
3. Structuring Zion along purely pastoral or agricultural lines will inhibit optimum Zion's development in the midst of industrialized, urbanized societies.
4. The Saints shall experience real interdependence with their non-member neighbors as they build Zion.
5. The Saints will be sensitive to the feelings and values of persons already living in areas intended for Zion's gathering.

In the early twentieth century the Saints still had a vision of Zion which was linked to a particular physical location--Independence, Mo. Saints began to move back to the Independence area in the 1870's. By 1900 a large number of Saints resided in that area, this encouraged many in the church to look upon that locale with hope and expectations as the Center Place of Zion. In 1910 an 'Order of Enoch' was founded in Independence and lands were purchased and co-operative enterprises begun. The Saints found that they were relatively excepted by their neighbors and the growth of

⁵Richard P. Howard, "Zion: Historical Images," Commission (January 1976) 8.

the Saints Church in that area increased at a phenomenal rate. By 1920 the headquarters of the church was moved to Independence. It became the 'Center Place' of the church. The Saints in general were still discouraged from gathering to this one location. The Saints were directed to reach out and evangelize all of North America, and send missionaries throughout the world. The message of Zion was for all the communities of the world and not to be hidden in one exclusive location.⁶

ZION--CONDITION AND PROCESS

Condition and process are relational factors in a universal understanding of Zion. Of the Restoration scriptures which define and point to these aspects of Zion, one passage in particular points to both condition and process:⁷

The work of preparation and the perfection of my Saints go forward slowly and Zionic conditions are no further away nor any closer than the spiritual condition of my people justifies; . . .

This scripture indicates a process which links spiritual condition with Zionic development. Again a Restoration understanding of 'spiritual condition' is wholistic. The physical or temporal and spiritual aspects of human living are inseparable and mutually dependent.

Zion as a Condition--God's Supra-Culture

Zion is the vision of a new way of living, a particular

⁶Ibid.

⁷Doctrine and Covenants, 140:5c.

life-style. A Righteous people of one heart and mind:⁸

And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them;. . .

Zion seeks a new condition through the acceptance of God's love and the transmitting of that love to others. The 'good news' of Jesus Christ has implications for not only individuals but for society as well. Zion represents God's salvation for society. Zion is a 'supra-culture' of God at work in this world--"the word of God changes the direction of culture and transforms it."⁹

The Kingdom of God is the prototype--the eschatological image of an age of peace and social destiny. Zion is the response of the people of God to that eschatological vision. The following statement of Pannenberg contains a similar idea:¹⁰

It is the essential nature of the church to be the new Israel, and thus to provide an example of the future society of love for all men, so that the impulse of love that creates justice proceeds from the church into all human communities.

Zion is not to be immediately imposed upon the structures of this world; rather it is the real effort and work of the people of God in transforming the systems of this world in harmony with the Holy Spirit and according to the vision of

⁸Genesis 7:23 (Inspired Version)

⁹Bruce J. Nicholls, Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity, Press, 1979)

¹⁰Wolfhart Pannenberg, What Is Man? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970) p. 109.

the eschatological Kingdom. Gutierrez states:¹¹

The Gospel does not provide a utopia for us; this is a human work. The word is a free gift of the Lord. But the Gospel is not alien to the historical plan; on the contrary, the human plan and the gift of God imply each other. The Word is the foundation and the meaning of all human existence; this foundation is attested to and this meaning is concretized through human actions.

The task and cause of Zion spans all generations, but points to final destiny. It is not to be 'built' in any one generation, from start to finish. We cannot think of Zion as a static condition limited to one place or to one particular time. Zion must be seen as a process which affected past generations, has definite implications for the present, and points us towards the future.

Zion As A Process

In Zion is a particular view of history which projects hope, rather than futility or despair in the course of human events. Many Christians believe that human history will never be redeemed. These Christians hope and expect Christ to rescue 'the faithful believers' before catastrophic events bring an end to human affairs. Individual salvation is the emphasis and efforts to change 'the world' are considered futile. Christians of this stripe are representative of Niebuhr's 'Christ against Culture' type. Zion, however, affirms that God's purposes for humanity will be fulfilled in this world in the total context of history--past, present,

¹¹Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973) p. 238.

and future. Pannenberg expresses this idea in the following statement.¹²

. . .man's destiny is directed toward attaining the wholeness of his own existence. This wholeness is not possible apart from the unity of this world and apart from community with other men. Thus, the social process appears to be the path along which man's destiny is to be sought.

It is the task of the people of God to transform the systems of this world through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If the cause of Zion was only a human affair then it would be destined for failure. Zion, however, is the response of God's people to His will. The process of Zion shines forth from a vision of God's Kingdom, which comes to us from the past and the future, into present existence. The past provides us with the foundation on which to build. The future gives us our direction and provides us with hope in a vision of the finished product. Geoffrey F. Spencer, a Restoration theologian, expresses this idea in the following statement:¹³

Zion is the hope which rescues history from fate or despair. This is not to suggest that human beings of their own power, and skill can bring the kingdom of God to pass. But is to affirm that history is moving in a direction, and that the end of history, or its purpose, is to be fulfilled in the will of God. Further, persons are called to participate with God in the redeeming of the world.

It is an affirmation of the Zionitic process, that God's will is to be ultimately victorious in this world and in the total realm of human history--past, present, and future.

¹²Pannenberg, p. 110.

¹³Geoffrey F. Spencer, "Symbol and Process: An Exploration into the concept of Zion" in Maurice L. Draper and Clare D. Vlahos Restoration Studies I (Independence, MO: Herald, 1980) p. 278.

Zionic Process and Pannenberg's Approach

Pannenberg finds an affirmation of God's ultimate victory in an event of the past--the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the future a common resurrection of the dead will bring a "full revelation of the Kingdom of God, which will complete man's social destiny."¹⁴ All generations of human-kind will participate.¹⁵ A distinction can be made between the Zionic process proposed in this work and Pannenberg's expectation of a break between present historical existence and a new form of existence which contains the full revelation of God's Kingdom.¹⁶ The Zionic process allows for a full revelation of God's Kingdom to be revealed in the context of human history. This is similar to the Utopian vision of Gutierrez which he expects to be fulfilled in historical reality.¹⁷

Zion and Zeitgeist: The Contextual Time Factor

How are we to relate the past and future visions of Zion to the efforts and realities of the present? In reviewing the Restoration Scriptures which point to Zion it becomes obvious that not all of the features and manifestations presented are equally relevant or even possible in our present

¹⁴Pannenberg, The Apostles Creed (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979) p. 176.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Pannenberg, What Is Man, p. 108.

¹⁷Gutierrez, p. 168.

world. Does Zion call us to somehow restore the 1st century Christian communitarian effort (as presented in the Book of Acts)? Are we required to follow a 19th century utopian vision? Is the eschatological Zion of the future our task or merely our target? The answers to these questions are: yes, no, and maybe so--but not necessarily in that order!

The German concept of Zeitgeist (time spirit or the spirit of the age) may be particularly helpful in understanding this problem. Zeitgeist symbolizes the cultural climate or social/situational context.¹⁸

It is my position that Zion is best understood as a faithful and prophetic response of God's people to the eschatological vision of His supra-cultural Kingdom. Because the Zeitgeist or context may be distinct, a faithful-prophetic Zion response, for any generation, may also be somewhat unique. Indeed there may be certain universal characteristics of Zion which should be incorporated in the response of any age. However, the unique expression or emphasis and the particular is relative to the Zeitgeist. Such a response is necessarily prophetic. Zeitgeist provides the context but the Holy Spirit defines the faithful response. The 'true' prophetic leaders of any age, see the vision of God's Kingdom, consider the Zeitgeist, seek Divine Inspiration, and define the particular.

¹⁸Maxwell A. Constance, "Reflections on the Second Advent and Other Eschatological Problems," in Maurice L. Draper and A. Bruce Lindgren (eds.) Restoration Studies II (Independence, MO: Herald, 1983) p. 208.

I must acknowledge that much of the rationale for the foregoing proposal was formulated in response to an article by James A. Sanders--"Hermeneutics In True and False Prophecy", and his informative lectures given as part of a class in the Spring of 1980--"Authority In Old Testament Prophecy." The point made by Professor Sanders is that the hermeneutics of old testament prophets could be considered 'true' or 'false' in their application of ancient texts and theological traditions to the context ("the historical, cultural, social, political, economic, national and international situations") they were addressing.¹⁹ "Whenever the freedom of God as creator is forgotten or denied in adapting traditional 'text' to a given context, there is threat of falsehood."²⁰

There is a message here for us today. The application of preconceived ideas and notions of former years may actually be detrimental for the cause of Zion in the 1980's. However this does not necessarily mean that such ideas and notions are to be considered 'false' or invalid. They may have been 'faithfully' applied in the past, and there may yet be a context for their 'true' application in the future.²¹ Again, a 'true' and prophetic Zionite leadership must lead us forward to a faithful response in harmony with the Holy Spirit which calls us to serve in our present context. A document presented by W. Wallace Smith (the 4th President of the Saints

¹⁹James A. Sanders, Torah and Canon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972) pp. 21-2.

²⁰Ibid., p. 38.

²¹Constance, p. 208.

Church, 1958-1978) to the 1964 World Conference and now section 147 of the Doctrine and Covenants, contains the following statement which profoundly supports this contextual proposal:²²

Instruction which has been given in former years is applicable in principle to the needs of today and should be so regarded by those who are seeking ways to accomplish the will of their heavenly Father. But the demands of a growing church require that these principles shall be evaluated and subjected to further interpretation. This requisite has always been present. In meeting it under the guidance of my spirit, my servants have learned the intent of these principles more truly.

ZION--TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL REALITY

Zion is more than just a spiritual concept or process, it also proposes definite physical and social properties. Zion has spatial reality and temporal relevance.

I propose to explore these elements and to define or offer an understanding of Zion which is based upon a contextual perspective.

Zion as Utopia--Collective Stewardship

The Zionite efforts of the Saints in the 19th century included diverse social, economic, and political features. How is the Utopian vision of the early Saints a viable, relevant interpretation and part of Zion today or in the future?

Many Saints continue to look upon the early communitarian efforts with a nostalgic view. Some of the economic

²²Doctrine and Covenants, 147:7.

guidelines for these efforts continue to be included in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants and therefore still seem to present a potential, if not authorized, Zionite design or policy. However, this is not necessarily the case. In reviewing these revelatory guidelines of Joseph Smith, one must conclude that they are--Individual, localized, and particular--directed to individuals, specific locations, and particular contexts.

Historically there have been numerous attempts, by various groups and communities of the Saints, to implement some or all of these 'Zionite' economic guidelines--with varying degrees of success. Today there are a large number of examples among the Saints (official and unofficial efforts), including cooperative business enterprises and small communities, which strive to continue in this tradition. These examples represent a vital and dynamic part of the Zionite witness to each generation. However, such examples are also individual, localized, and particular. They cannot presently represent a general policy for the entire Saints Church with a world wide membership living in a pluralistic contextual variety.

Zion is called by God to be a world-wide utopian effort and must be understood as a collective Stewardship--a responsibility of all of the Saints. This universal perspective is supported by the Basic Beliefs Committee in their official statement concerning Zion:²³

²³Committee on Basic Beliefs, Exploring the Church (Independence, MO: Herald, 1970) p. 172.

We believe that Zion is the means by which the prophetic church participates in the world to embody the divine intent for all personal and social relations. Zion is the implementation of those principles, processes, and relationships which give concrete expression to the power of the Kingdom of God in the World. It affirms the concern of the gospel with the structures of our common life together and promotes the expression of God's reconciling love in the world, thus bringing forth the divine life in human society.

Gutierrez presents a similar utopian view:²⁴

But utopia is also an annunciation, an annunciation of what is not yet, but will be; it is the forecast of a different order of things, a new society.

This utopian vision must lead to action in the present or it is an evasion of reality. "Utopia must necessarily lead to a commitment to support the emergence of a new social consciousness and new relationships among people."²⁵ The goals according to Gutierrez are--economic, social, and political liberation. The results are--a new "communion with God and with all men."²⁶

Pannenberg also sees that the church has a social responsibility which is defined and demanded by the coming Kingdom of God:²⁷

It (the church) must take the present social and political forms with greatest seriousness and appraise them in the light of the coming Kingdom of God. The coming Kingdom is not some other worldly phenomenon; it is the destiny of present society. . . We are not called to choose between concern for the Kingdom and concern for society. Rather, in concern for society and destiny, namely, for the Kingdom of God.

²⁴Gutierrez, p. 233.

²⁵Ibid., p. 234. ²⁶Ibid., p. 235.

²⁷Wolfhart Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977) p. 84.

For Pannenberg, the church is called to reflect God's love and to provide an example of the future society. Such reflected love will promote justice and affect a change in human communities.²⁸

Again, Zion is the collective stewardship or responsibility of God's people in transforming the systems of this world according to the context, in harmony with the Holy Spirit, and as defined by the vision of God's eschatological Kingdom. The universal call is utopian--presenting God's supra-cultural vision and destiny for the social, economic and political systems of this world. The distinctive or particular call, of any time or place, is to be determined by the Zeitgeist or context, in harmony with the Holy Spirit and the eschatological vision.

Zion as Spatial Reality

Zion as the Kingdom of God on earth presupposes a spatial reality which in general could include all the world and in particular, the location of every individual Christian. It is in Christ that humans may participate in the future eschatological Kingdom, but is in humans that the future Kingdom has present reality in this world. In both cases Christ is the necessary functional link.

Pannenberg states: ". . .that Kingdom became present in Him (Jesus Christ). In Him the Kingdom is present to all

²⁸Pannenberg, What Is Man, p. 109.

men."²⁹ In Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Kingdom of God is available on earth. In Christ, humans may participate in that Kingdom and become a part of its present corporate reality --Zion.

Zion is resident in those individuals who accept Zion's stewardship responsibilities and become agents for change and transformation in this world. In this sense, Zion has spatial reality and temporal relevance.

Zion and the Church. It is in the church that individuals are called to the collection stewardship responsibilities of Zion. The church is called to be collectively involved in transforming the world. The Kingdom of God is the primary target, and the eschatological prototype. Zion is the response of the church to that eschatological vision.

Pannenberg affirms this understanding:³⁰

The central concern of the Church, and the primary point of reference for understanding the Church, must be the Kingdom of God. That is, the Kingdom must be the central concern of the church if the church is to remain faithful to the message of Jesus. This Kingdom of God, according to Jesus' proclamation, points toward the future of the world, of all humanity.

As a collective missional goal and identity for the Church; Zion again has spatial reality.

Zion and the Gathering Principle. Within the Saints Church, specific geographical areas have been designated by the leadership, as gathering places or 'Stakes of Zion'.

²⁹Pannenberg, Theology, p. 81.

³⁰Ibid., p. 73.

These areas are distinctive in their cooperative efforts and sufficient in numerical strength for community impact. Besides Stakes, there are Zionie communities and gathering areas for the Saints throughout the world. The Gathering Principle is not to be considered an exclusive retreat from the world. But rather an opportunity to be more effective and to have a greater impact upon the communities and areas designated. In this context, Zion has specific spatial reality.

The Center Place of Zion. In 1831, Independence, Missouri was designated as the Center Place.³¹ Since 1920, the World Headquarters of the Saints Church has been located there. Independence serves as a focal point and as a symbol for the Zionie activity of the Saints throughout the world--somewhat like Jerusalem serves as a symbol for Jewish Zionie hope. Independence has also been designated as the location for a 'City of Zion'--'The New Jerusalem'. We will consider this distinct spatial identity in the context of eschatological expectation--in our next section. At Independence, Mo., Zion has a truly unique and particular spatial identity and reality.

ZION--ESCHATOLOGICAL HOPE AND EXPECTATIONS

The Kingdom of God shines forth into our present reality as the eschatological hope and expectations for an

³¹Doctrine and Covenants, 57:1.

age of peace and social destiny. The expectation "of the coming righteousness and the coming peace, of the coming freedom and dignity of men"³² provides us with real hope and real objectives in working for the Kingdom of God. Zion is the response of God's people to that unique and vision of hope and expectations. The call of Zion is not some other-worldly phenomenon or fulfillment. The eschatological hope and expectations of God's coming kingdom provides the cause of Zion with a relevant view of actual social destiny; a view which defines responsibility and demands action in present society.³³

The New Jerusalem

Among the Saints, the greatest disparity in understanding about zion involves the eschatological hope and expectations of a New Jerusalem.

A large number of Saints continue to view Zion as a city to be built in and around Independence, Missouri. The expectation is that once the city and the people are properly prepared, Christ will return and direct world affairs for a millenium, from the temple in this New Jerusalem--His capital city of the Western hemisphere. Some proclaim that the 'time is ripe'--the city needs to be built now. The Restoration Scriptures are cited as the 'proofs' for this position.

³²Jurgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) p. 327.

³³Pannenberg, Theology, pp. 83-84.

Again the contemporary leaders of the Saints Church have discouraged this particular and potentially exclusive view of Zion and have questioned its relevancy and its potential reality.

How are we to reconcile these divergent opinions about Zion? As we review the Restoration Scriptures which pertain to Zion as the New Jerusalem, we must note that there is a consistent context which envelopes and surrounds these references. This context calls for a particular and unique set of circumstances. The New Jerusalem will arise and will flourish during one specific moment in history--the final moment. The city will be built at one specific location in the world--Independence, Mo. At the present time, the economic, political and spatial circumstances do not meet the scriptural criteria. This issue can be approached in our understanding of the contextual time factor. Indeed the building of the New Jerusalem is a distinctive work, to be pursued at a particular time, in a particular place, and according to a particular context. Just because the present context does not call for the New Jerusalem, this does not mean that the vision is necessarily improper or invalid. Such an idea and notion may have been 'faithfully' applied in the past, and there may yet be a context for its 'true' and 'faithful' application in the future. Our present context may now call us to emphasize other Zionite approaches and motifs. However, the New Jerusalem may still be viewed as a symbol of the future.

Again, a 'true' and prophetic leadership must lead us forward to a faithful Zionite response, in harmony with the Holy Spirit which calls us to serve in our present context--not the past nor the future.

Zion As An Anticipated Future Life

Zion spans the break between this world and the world to come. The following scripture indicates a resurrection and a millenium--A New Future kind of Life:³⁴

. . .and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years shall the earth rest.

Zion is past, present, and future, and all who participate will receive an inheritance in the Zion to come--from eternity to eternity:³⁵

You have taken Zion to your own bosom from all your creations, from all eternity to all eternity, and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of your throne.

According to Pannenberg, life is lived by anticipation, an anticipation which is directed toward a final outcome--the resurrection of the dead, the end of this world, and the creation of a new world. "The longing of all men is directed to this (new) reality,"--a new world to come.³⁶

In Zion, we can anticipate God's Kingdom and future new world, and participate in it within the present reality of this world.

³⁴Genesis 7:72 (Inspired Version)

³⁵Doctrine and Covenants, 36:6F.

³⁶Pannenberg, What Is Man, p. 53.

THE SAINTS OF ZION: AN ESCHATOLOGICAL IDENTITY
FOR THE SAINTS CHURCH

There are numerous references in the Restoration Scriptures which point to Zion in the corporate sense--as a people and an identity:^{37 38}

And the Lord called his people, Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them.;

Let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion, THE PURE IN HEART; therefore let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked small mourn.

A number of references also point to Zion as the people of God:³⁹

. . .that I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, 'Behold, thou art my people.'

In Zion, the primary Corporate task of the Saints also becomes a major corporate identity: The Saints of Zion.

The Saints of Zion as a New Humanity

Participation in Zion is necessarily defined in one's relation and position with Christ. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new,"--II Cor. 5:17.

Zion is the present manifestation of God's coming kingdom. Participants in Zion represent the coming new world in present reality and context. In this sense, the Saints

³⁷Genesis 7:23 (Inspired Version)

³⁸Doctrine and Covenants, 94:5C.

³⁹Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 5:99.

of Zion are present examples of a New Humanity.

The Saints of Zion as a Leaven or a Remnant

Today in the Saints Church, conflicting images of Zion remain as a divisive force. Many Saints want to continue to view Zion as the gathering of a faithful 'remnant' to Independence, Mo. The current leaders are encouraging the Saints to view Zion as a 'leaven' in the world; emphasizing that Independence is to be understood as only the 'Center Place' of Zion activity.⁴⁰

The 'Leaven' and the 'Remnant' approach may both represent potentially valid aspects of Zion activity and identity. Both motifs are viable traditions which come down to us from Jewish and Christian historical experience.

Again, the contextual time factor or Zeitgeist should determine the current Zion activity and emphasis. It is my opinion that, in our present North American context, the 'Leaven' motif is a particularly faithful representation of the present call to Zion activity and identity. However, there may be future contexts and circumstances which may suggest or even demand a 'Remnant' motif. In addition there may be specific political, economic, cultural and spatial contexts, throughout the world, which may require a Remnant approach. We should not view these two motifs as being either 'true' or 'false', but only as being; contextually relevant or contextually inappropriate. A World Church demands pluralistic flexibility.

⁴⁰Howard, p. 8.

The Saints of Zion, in the United States of America, may be called to be a leaven; while in India, the Saints of Zion are gathered in specific communities as a faithful Remnant. Therefore the Saints of Zion may faithfully be either a 'Leaven' or a 'remnant' or both according to the context.

The Saints of Zion as an Identity

A comprehensive view of Zion speaks to the issues of individual identity. Zion can provide values and goals. It projects a transcendent purpose or meaning in life. Zion is a vision of the future--a view of the ultimate, which allows the individual participants to interpret present reality and look beyond. But the focus of Zion is not the individual, it is the collective. In Christ, individuals find personal salvation and identity. In Christ's Zion Kingdom, collective identity and salvation is available to the Saints, for all humanity, and ultimately for the world.

Zion has traditionally been one of the most important unique characteristics of the Restoration Movement and the Saints Church.⁴¹ The goals and priorities of the church have been defined in relation to the Saints understanding of Zion, as the major mission of the church.

This Zionology defines a comprehensive view of Zion which speaks to the issues of corporate identity for the

⁴¹The Kingdom of God is a common Jewish and Christian doctrine. However, the Saints interpretation of Zion is unique in its total form, which is a unity of diverse common religious elements and ideas with various temporal manifestations.

Saints Church. In Zion, the Saints find corporate identity. Through Zion, identity and mission is unified. Of Zion, the Saints may be known by their task: The Saints of Zion.

ZIONOLOGY AND THE SAINTS OF ZION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SAINTS CHURCH

Zion has always been a major point of unique identity within the Saints Church. However in the last twenty years, conflicting images of Zion have confused the Saints. As a basis for identity, Zion is not as clear as it once was. Also the exclusive 'True Church' point of identity has been discouraged and discontinued by the church leaders. This left the Saints with a diminished sense of identity which has weakened the church as an organization.

As stated previously, it is extremely important for the members of any group or organization to have a clear sense of identity and purpose. Otherwise, positive motivation towards group goals and objectives is difficult to achieve.⁴²

It is the position of this project that corporate identity, for the Saints Church, could be stronger if it was based upon a unifying theology of Zion. The Zionology of this chapter is a response to this thesis. It provides a comprehensive view of Zion. This work has attempted to

⁴²Philip Selznick, "Foundations of the Theory of Organization," in Joseph A. Litterer (ed.) Organizations: Systems, Control and Adaptation (New York: Wiley, 1969) 2:362; Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations (New York: Wiley, 1966) p. 367.

provide a context which allows for the embracing and the unification of diverse and sometimes conflicting images, definitions, and approaches to Zion. The task was to clarify, and unify; while the conflicting images were to be defused and disengaged. By-in-large this Zionology has been able to do just that.

The eschatology of this proposal spans categories #3 and #4. Some aspects of Zion emphasize the Natural Present-Future, while other aspects look to Supernatural Hope or Expectations; both have their place and function in this Zionology.

A vast majority of the Saints could relate to this work. Even the small minority, who would prefer a category #1 or #2 approach, could identify with some of the proposal. If properly implemented, this Zionology could encourage the Saints to expand their present view of Zion and achieve an increasingly stronger sense of common purpose and identity. The results would be positive membership motivation and a stronger church.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY

The Saints Church (The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) is in the midst of an identity crisis which is caused by discordant theological views and divergent definitions of church identity. The purpose of this project is to define a theological basis for a unique identity within the Saints Church, which will accommodate diverse theological view points.

The project thesis proposes that the Restoration (Mormon) concept of Zion can provide an inclusive theological basis for unique common identity, purpose and motivation within the Saints Church. Zion is a name used by the Restoration (Mormon) churches to refer to their idea of The Kingdom of God on Earth. Traditionally Zion has been a major point of unique identity within the Saints Church and theologically it falls into a category of eschatology.

A secondary thesis maintains that it is important for the members of a church to have a clear sense of identity and purpose in order to sustain positive membership motivation and organizational strength.

The secondary thesis was supported by the organizational theories of Phillip Selznick and the research evidence. Selznick associate homogeneous identity with organizational

stability, strength, and membership motivation.¹ His theory also indicates that the mark of a healthy church is the ability to transmit a clear sense of identity to new members, and require complete integration.² Research completed by Dean R. Hoge shows that doctrinal beliefs and values can have a positive influence on membership commitment within churches.³ Distinctive beliefs and lifestyle (identity) were also shown to be major factors in organizational strengths and church vitality in the research of John E. Biersdorf.⁴

Dean M. Kelley also supports the secondary thesis; however, his more detailed and particular theories were shown to be less reliable by the research. Kelley cites conservative beliefs, authoritarian polity, and exclusivity as additional positive factors in church strength and growth.⁵ These factors were not supported by most of the research.

Because the Restoration (Mormon) idea of Zion falls into the theological category of eschatology, relevant examples of contemporary eschatology were examined and eschatological thinking was classified in one of four categories

¹Philip Selznick, "Foundation of the Theory of Organization," in Joseph A. Litterer (ed.) Organizations: Systems, Control and Adaptation. (New York: Wiley, 1969) 2:362.

²Ibid.

³Dean R. Hoge, "A Test of Theories of Denominational Growth and Decline," in Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen (eds.) Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978 (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979) p. 192.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Dean M. Kelley, Why Conservative Churches are Growing (New York: Harper & Row, 1977)

devised for this project:

1. Supernatural Destiny
2. Natural Present-Future
3. Supernatural with Natural Present Implications
4. Natural with Supernatural Hope or Expectations

Category #1 - The Supernatural Destiny approach is rooted in traditional soteriology. It presents a destiny which is completely in a different kind of existence, a wholly future, other-worldly existence brought about through divine supernatural intervention (Similar to Niebuhr's 'Christ against Culture').

Category #2 - The Natural Present-Future approach emphasizes the ultimate destiny of this world and the present and future conditions of human existence. Soteriology is de-emphasized, negated, or ignored by the theologians of this approach ('Christ of Culture').

Category #3 - The Supernatural with Natural Present Implications approach emphasizes the traditional soteriological considerations and eschatological expectations, but calls for a necessary present response in changing this world for the better ('Christ the Transformer of Culture' with a tendency towards the 'Christ above Culture' motif).

Category #4 - The Natural with Supernatural Hope or Expectations Approach is based upon the Natural Present-Future approach, but allows for the possibility of some type of supernatural divine intervention and soteriology ('Christ the Transformer of Culture' with a tendency towards the 'Christ of Culture' motif).

The eschatological method of Wolfhart Pannenberg was particularly helpful in writing the 'theology of Zion'. Other important contemporary theologians used in this project include Gustavo Gutierrez, and John B. Cobb, Jr. The writings of Pannenberg are representative of Category #4, while Gutierrez and Cobb are examples of Category #2.

It is the position of this project that corporate identity, for the Saints Church, could be stronger if it was based upon a unifying theology of Zion. The Zionology of this project proposes a comprehensive view of Zion as a response to this thesis.

Zion is presently a theological battleground within the Saints Church. This work has attempted to provide a context which allows for the embracing and the unification of diverse and sometimes conflicting images, definitions, and approaches to Zion. By-in-large, Zionology has been able to do just that.

The exegetical method of Professor James A. Sanders, contained in his article--"Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy",⁶ and the German concept of Zeitgeist (time spirit or spirit of the age) provided the theoretical framework for the 'contextual time factor' approach of this project. The following statement represents the 'contextual time factor' approach to Zion.

⁶James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy," in George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (eds.) Canon and Authority (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) 21-41

Zion is best understood as a faithful and prophetic response of God's people to the eschatological vision of his supra-cultural kingdom. Because the Zeitgeist or context may be distinct, a faithful-prophetic Zionism response, for any generation, may also be somewhat unique. Indeed there may be certain universal characteristics of Zion which should be incorporated in the response of any age. However, the unique expression or emphasis and the particular is relative to the Zeitgeist or context. The application of preconceived ideas and notions of former years may actually be detrimental for the cause of Zion in the 1980's. However, this does not necessarily mean that such ideas and notions are to be considered 'false' or invalid. They may have been 'faithfully' applied in the past, and there may yet be a context for their 'true' application in the future. A 'true' and prophetic Zionism leadership must lead the church to a faithful response in harmony with the Holy Spirit which always calls the people of God to serve in their present context.

The conflicting images or definitions of Zion were resolved in this project by applying this 'contextual time factor' approach. For example; Zion as a city--the New Jerusalem--was found to be a viable eschatological vision with application in a particular context of the future. This vision does not have to be negated just because the present context calls for a different Zionism approach. Likewise; the 'Remnant' motif of Zion does not need to be rejected as false just because our present North American

context calls for the Saints of Zion to be a 'leaven' in the world. There may be contexts and circumstance which may suggest or even demand a 'Remnant' approach in the future. In addition, there may be specific political, economic, cultural, and spatial contexts throughout the world, which may require a 'remnant' approach in the present. The two motifs, 'Remnant' and 'Leaven', should not be viewed as being either 'true' or 'false', but only as being contextually relevant or contextually inappropriate.

Again, the project thesis is that a theology of Zion can accommodate diverse theological viewpoints and provide a basis for unique common identity, purpose, and motivation within the Saints Church.

The Zionology of this project has been able to accommodate conflicting images through the 'contextual time factor' approach. Also, the eschatology of this proposal spans categories #3 and #4, which a majority of the Saints will be able to identify with. Even those who prefer a category #1 or #2 approach will be able to find some common ground.

Zionology also provides the Saints with a unique corporate identity--'The Saints of Zion'. This identity unifies and unites the Saints with their major mission and organizational purpose--Zion.

Finally, Zionology defines a context and provides a basis for positive membership motivation. The secondary project thesis, which associated clarified identity and

purpose with positive motivation, was supported by the research. Therefore, this Zionology, which defines a clear unique common identity and mission for the Saints, could provide a basis for positive membership motivation within the Saints Church if it was properly implemented. The results could be--a stronger church. Also the possibilities could include qualitative and quantitative church growth.

This Zionology could be implemented and emphasized as part of the theological basis for the current 'Faith to Grow Program'. The present program materials do not adequately define a unique identity, nor do they project a sense of unique purpose or mission for the Saints Church. The Zionology of this project could address this deficiency. Zionology could also provide a theological basis for future curriculum materials to be used in Sunday Schools, Reunions, camps, and group discussions or study courses.

This Zionology could encourage the Saints to expand their present view of Zion and achieve an increasingly stronger sense of common purpose and identity. The results would be positive membership motivation and a stronger church.

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